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EVERYMAN AND CHRISTIANITY

A Working Creed

By

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TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY MOTHER
IN WHOM I FIRST SAW CHRIST

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PREFACE

As the title shows, this book is concerned with a Creed, but it is not meant to be a theology or an apologetic. The creed represents the belief of the average Briton about the best things in life and conduct. The implications of these beliefs have been traced, and the argument of the book is that they lead towards those central truths which are a heritage common to all the various forms of Christianity. Frequently, it is true, the average man has little or no connexion with the Churches. Moreover, he knows that his opinions, for example, on divorce, are repudiated by some Churches, his attitude towards gambling by others. Hence he is apt to imagine that his religion, such as he recognizes it to be, is not particularly connected with Christianity, and he does not realize how essentially Christian are his beliefs about the chief values of life. Those who are acquainted with the moral ideals of the world before Christ, even as represented by the great thinkers of Greece, realize the vast difference Christ's teaching has made; for example the 'high-minded' man whom Aristotle so admires repels the modern mind. The reason is that the Christian ideal has transformed our ideals. Though virtue is the same for us as for Aristotle, its expression is not. The things men most surely believe

about moral qualities to-day have been shaped under Christian influence. It is not strange that they imply that Christianity most of all fulfils them. I have tried to show that the philosophy of life behind the working creed of every good man is identified with the essential teaching of Christianity. The importance of realizing this is great, for I cannot but believe that the future of humanity depends on its taking the teaching of Jesus as its rule of life. I have attempted to indicate how simple, reasonable, and sufficient the central ideas of Christianity are. Many things associated with Christian teaching, however useful, are not essential, and the objections to Christianity centre nearly always around the non-essentials. I can but hope that the following pages may help towards an understanding of the things that matter most.

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E. S. WATERHOUSE.

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EVERYMAN AND CHRISTIANITY

A Working Creed

I

‘I BELIEVE IN GOODNESS, AND
THEREFORE IN GOD’

I BELIEVE in Goodness.’ That sentence must surely find a place in every man’s creed. Ours is an age impatient and mistrustful of creeds, yet no man living but has a creed, for creed means more than dogma or theology. It means those beliefs by which men live. The most matter-of-fact man has his creed, and it is by no means confined to the bare boundaries of facts which appeal to the senses, that can be measured and weighed. If it is a fact that the pillars of the Parthenon are heavy, it is equally a fact that they are beautiful. Yet there is no scale to measure beauty as we measure weight. So, too, we believe in the existence of pressure, temperature, light, and sound, because of the testimony of our senses. But not less surely do we believe in bravery, justice, honesty, mercy, and live by our belief in abstract qualities as much as, perhaps more than, by things concrete. Our belief in them is unshakable. Even though the science of to-day be thrown on the scrap-heap to-morrow, these things remain, the immortals in a mortal world. As an ordinary man, then, I believe in goodness; and do not even the cynics the same.

But not every man thinks out his creed, and our present purpose is to take the working creed of our daily life, and try to trace out its ultimate implications. Not only is this of interest in itself ; it may help in another way. Many a man asks, ' What is it reasonable to believe about God and the universe, human life and duty, the soul and its destiny ? ' It may be that upon the basis of the things we do believe, we can build up some conception of what we reasonably may believe. We shall not offer any dogmatic answer to such a question, nor any ready-made creed, Christian or otherwise. But, examining the beliefs by which life is lived, we may find in what they imply the answer we seek. To do so is not to assert that what is generally believed is therefore necessarily true and consistent. But it is to express faith that what captures the mind of the mass of thoughtful men is not likely to prove wholly ungrounded or unreasonable. Its foundation, reached after due testing and sifting, may well be imagined to be firmly bedded in truth.

Goodness Witnesses to God

First, then, belief in goodness. Goodness is real. We cannot use the word ' real ' in any sense deeper than this. We find goodness in man, some perhaps in every man. Whence does it come ? ' A man can receive nothing except it have been given him.' Must not goodness, then, indicate the character of the source whence man has his being ? If any one should object that the same could be argued concerning evil, it is enough to point out the universal sense that the good *ought* to be. That no one can

disbelieve. Must we not regard such a sense, as deeply implanted in man as his instincts, as indicating something which his Maker has set within him? If so, must it not be taken as revealing to him something concerning the source from which he has come?

That mankind owes its being to a source other than itself is obvious. If we call that source God, we are but following the custom of the great mass of humanity. This much belief in God is a matter of common sense rather than of religion. The universal sign of religion is that it adds to this belief the further belief that God is good to man. Let us ask then in what way the religions of mankind have borne this testimony, and whether their testimony is true.

The Testimony of Religion

Man is everywhere religious. From the present moment to remotest antiquity no known race of men has ever been without some religious belief, and there is no reason to imagine any race ever will be. Superstitious and degraded though many forms of heathen and primitive worship appear to us, yet there is a deep significance in the fact that man has never been content to be merely a clever animal. Blindly and uncertainly though it be, he has persisted in stumbling upward upon the path that leads away from the physical to the spiritual; impelled, it would seem, by a driving force, strangely similar to that of the instincts he follows. But diverse though the religions of mankind are, from lowest to highest all presume that the god will be good to his worshipper. For what other reason does even the savage attempt

to placate some baleful demon? 'It is possible,' he argues, 'to induce him to be kind to me.' That is the crude beginning of a process of thought that culminates in the belief that the Lord is loving unto every man, that His nature and His name are Love. From highest to lowest, then, all religion bears common witness to belief in the goodness of the divine.

Is the Testimony True?

But is the belief true? Does the goodness we recognize in the world endorse this testimony of all religion? Let us look at the matter from an entirely impartial standpoint. God is the name we have given to the Source of our being. What is the attitude of that Source to us? Presuming that such an attitude is constant, not capricious, it can only be hostile, neutral, or friendly. The first we need not seriously entertain. A God hostile to us would not, one feels, allow us to continue to exist. The alternative is neutral or good.

There are 'facts' on both sides. It is needless to recount what can be said about the joy of life, its beauty, hope, peace on the one hand; about pain and sorrow, parasitism, madness, and the unlovely side of life on the other. It is just this mingling of good and bad that gives strength to the plea that God is neutral and cares not for the individual's destiny, perhaps not even for that of the race. Many will, therefore, say that we cannot tell. The goodness suggests God is good, but the other side, which seems just as integral in nature, denies it, and the conclusion of the whole matter is that we do not know.

The Necessity of Inquiries

Such an attitude, however, is neither morally nor scientifically to be justified. Morally we are entitled to be agnostic upon any issue that has no vital consequences ; but when the answer to any question will profoundly affect our own life and the life of others, we are surely obliged to try to find out whether it can be discovered. To decide that it cannot is indolent, even cowardly, in such a case. It is certainly not a scientific spirit that adopts such an attitude ; for the end of science is to attain truth. Here, then, are two possible views, hypotheses let us call them—God is good ; God is neutral. Test both ; weigh the consequences ; and ask which gives the better explanation of the facts of life.

Is there any reason for preferring one to the other ? We notice that belief in God's goodness *works better*. It produces results in life that the other does not. No man ever lived a better life because he believed that the Source of life was morally neutral. Millions have been helped to goodness by the belief that God is good. Such a belief was not only held by Jesus Christ, but it inspired His life and teaching and the faith He established upon earth. To claim that He was spiritually the wisest and greatest amongst men is not less than is due to Him. We listen with respect to the scientific expert. Has not the spiritual expert the same right to be considered ? In the world's greatest religions, Christian and non-Christian, the spiritual experts have taught the same belief in the goodness of God.

Again, such a belief *explains more*. If God is good, we can understand man's belief in goodness, his passionate conviction that the good *ought* to be

If not, it is almost inexplicable. Still more we have learnt that no living creature is produced without some instincts or equipment to enable it to adapt itself to its conditions. May we not look at man's spiritual and moral powers as given for such a purpose? Science at least does not suggest that any living organisms develop useless acquirements. If so, they fulfil part of the Maker's purpose for man. Are we then to think that such a Maker is Himself morally neutral and unspiritual? The unbelief that asks us to accept such a view is asking us to believe in a most astounding miracle, that a blind or neutral force can create in its products what it does not possess. Certainly, then, the belief that God is good has, in this respect, a great advantage over its rival.

Proof Comes from Life

Such considerations all tend towards our regarding the hypothesis 'God is good' as preferable to the hypothesis 'God is neutral.' They do not establish it as true, but they indicate that we should put it to the test. Nor do they dispose of the opposing facts, but they suggest that the opposing facts may possibly be reconciled with it.

What test, then, is possible? There is only one answer, the test of life. A scientific hypothesis is not established by any brilliant argument produced by its upholders, but solely and simply by its adequacy in meeting the facts. This test the belief in God triumphantly fulfils. It is true that it does not give an intellectual explanation of all life's anomalies. But in this respect its rival is just as inadequate, and indeed even more so. That by which men can live is, however, more than mere

reason. To accept an unreasonable belief is never justifiable, but this is not the case here. It is a question of two beliefs, both of which have reasons to support them, both of which do not answer fully the intellectual difficulties of life. But the one enables men to live better; and that, one has a right to submit, is a valid reason for giving it preference.

This, however, is not all. Life itself is wider than our intellectual grasp of its significance, and there is much in life which we do not fully understand, and yet cannot doubt. There are 'reasons of the heart,' as Pascal said, as well as reasons of the head. Those who adopt the belief that God is good, and live by it, find increasingly that it justifies itself to them. Such justification cannot always be explained, any more than an artist can explain to a Philistine why a masterpiece is beautiful. The man who has lived amongst the beautiful knows what the inartistic cannot know. In not an unlike manner does the belief that goodness lies at the heart of things prove itself in a hundred ways. It may well be that such indications would mean as little to others as the signs by which the Indian scout follows the trail would mean to the townsman. Yet the concurrence and harmony of the many build up a ground of certainty which is none the less firm even if it is not logically to be expressed. We must not forget that some of the greatest certainties of experience generally can never be cast into rational form.

Goodness involves Belief in God

Our conclusion therefore is that to believe in goodness implies belief in a good God. Unless this

is so, there is no foundation in the things that are ultimately real for the goodness in which we all believe. It becomes just a human custom or attitude, which has happened to be evolved in the development of life. Yet who is content to think goodness no more than that? Some may reply that, despite what has been said, they see no valid reason for believing in a good God. We may ask them whether they believe that human reason can attain truth, that human knowledge can grasp reality. Unless they are thorough sceptics they must believe this, and the sceptic stands on very slippery ground, for either he asserts that he does know something, namely that we cannot know, and so contradicts his scepticism in theory, or else he contradicts it in practice by treating knowledge as reliable, just as every one else does. This belief in our reason, however, is purely a matter of faith. We cannot prove by reason that reason is trustworthy. That would be a completely circular argument. But is not the testimony of our moral sense to goodness as fundamental as our reason? If I say, 'it is better to be unselfish than selfish,' do I not mean it to be asserted as universally true, just as if I said that twice two are four? The position of our opponents, however, is that reason is valid, but our moral sense's testimony to goodness at the heart of things is unreliable; for God, the Source of our being, is neutral towards us. In that case what guarantee have we that such a Being might not create us capable of eternally thinking that error was truth, living in a phantom or dream existence, and imagining it real? None whatever. A Being morally neutral may be rationally neutral

But a Being morally good guarantees that our human reason is no will-o'-the-wisp. Such a God would not mock the men He made. To believe in the goodness of God endorses both our moral sense and our reasoning powers. To deny it, not merely leaves our moral judgements hanging upon nothing ultimately real; it must also react back on any faith we have in our reason.

Unanswered Questions not Insuperable Objections

It is probable that those who are unconvinced that God is good are still held back at the bayonet's point of those sharp contradictions which seem to challenge God's goodness. Yet we can reasonably believe in that goodness without waiting to reconcile every contradiction. We believe in the general principle of physical evolution, but there are many unreconciled difficulties in the process still. We believe that hypnotism and even telepathy follow definite psychical laws, though very little of such laws is known to us. Not dissimilar is our belief in divine goodness. That we should be able to say why such goodness allows what appears to us manifestly evil is not possible, unless we could know the reason for the existence of the universe and its inhabitants. So long as that is hidden from us, we cannot solve all the problems of existence. If we should beware of judging others, we should even more be slow to pass judgement on the ways of God. We have not the materials for a just judgement. We affirm, for example, that pain is a blot upon the scheme of creation. Yet we declare pain to be bad, simply because we do not like enduring it. He would be a bold man who said that what is physically

unpleasant is necessarily, in an ultimate sense, bad.

A Creed to Live upon

There is, however, this way of regarding such problems. Our Maker must know that they make us question the way in which He deals with us. Yet He Himself has given us the very power to question. The animal suffers, but cannot wonder why. It is incredible to hold that God gave man such a power simply that man might rebel against Him. Such a God would be far lower morally than the men He made. There must, therefore, be some way of reconciliation. We may not yet see it, but it must surely exist. Perhaps those who come nearest to discovering it are to be found amongst those who have suffered most. That is a strange paradox, but is it not true?

We have, then, the first article of our creed. I believe in a good God. That is not all that theology predicates of God ; but for a working creed, a creed to live upon, it is enough.

To one fixed ground my spirit clings:
I know that God is good!

It is truth indeed.

II

‘I BELIEVE IN LOVE, AND THEREFORE IN CHRIST’

I BELIEVE in Love.’ In saying that, we need to define our term, for there are few, if any, words used more widely, from the highest to the lowest of meanings, than love. We speak of love of food or pleasure, of work or home, of persons and things, and of one’s God. When a man has in his creed the words, ‘I believe in love,’ however, he means his belief in a quality, or perhaps group of qualities, marking out an attitude towards others which the conscience of mankind at its best unanimously recognizes as morally the highest possible. To be moved by pure love—of mankind, of another, or even of a cause—means that there is in our motive and action no trace of self-interest, malice, envy, or fear, but a disinterested regard for their good. I think we mean also something further. Love is not the same as benevolence or altruism. It implies a personal touch, a note of feeling, even of pure passion, in our attitude towards others. Disinterested regard may be shown by a good government, but not love. Love is intensely personal, and we do not justly use that word of any impersonal type of justice or benevolence.

The Teacher of the Way of Love

We believe in such a motive as love. Only those who show an outward cynicism, to which their own hearts give the lie, have ever questioned it. We see it first of all perhaps in a mother's love, or in a father's sacrifices. Or we see it, it may be, in the devotion of the true patriot, of a scientist to truth, of a worker to duty ; and we bow before it as showing us how rich a lode of gold runs through this clay. But to see the best in man is to have a vision of God. Love appears to us as especially characteristically divine. 'God is Love' is the greatest and noblest truth ever written. In the civilized world at least it is almost axiomatic. Whoever believes in a personal God believes in Him as Love.

Yet if we ask how this conception of God came into the possession of the world we shall find that all centres upon the influence of one life. The ethnic faiths did not discover it. Of the world's most inspired religious teachers neither the Buddha in India nor Confucius in China had even a glimpse of it. Zarathushtra in Persia perhaps saw some distant gleam, but we know little of him, and cannot be certain. The gods of the Romans were poor creatures, intellectually and spiritually. Greece, despite the marvellous legacy she gave to the world, bequeathed no worthy conception of the divine nature. Her sons tell us rather of human nature. Her moralists ranged the virtues, wisdom, courage, temperance, justice ; but they did not name love. Indeed, their language knew no word for it in this sense. For love between the sexes, for love between friends, the Greek tongue had

words, but none to express exactly love as we are now speaking of it. It is not the mere loyal claim of a disciple for his master, but an historical fact, to state that the modern conception of what love in God and in man means was given to the world by Jesus of Nazareth.

Not, however, simply by His teaching. He troubled little about that. He wrote nothing, and took no steps, so far as we know, to ensure that any one else should keep a record. Much as the world owes to such of His teaching as has been preserved, it owes far more to His life. The Christian Church is not the consequence of His teaching ; it is the expression of His life. He left it unorganized, preferring that the impetus of His love should cut its own channels. The lives of men to-day tell the story of that love as surely as the rocks yield the records of geology. It is nearly two thousand years since they laid Him in that lone grave in a far-off Syrian town, but still millions live for Him, and for Him millions would die. No man who ever breathed—leader, thinker, teacher—has come within measurable distance of exercising an influence approaching His. Little wonder that we believe to-day in the power of love. It has been placarded before our eyes in the two-thousand-year long story of Jesus. Those who believe in love must believe in the reality and power of His love. To believe in love, then, is to believe in Christ. But what does belief in Christ imply? There can be no doubt that He lived, and that His character and influence made a movement that has inspired most that is best in the civilized world to-day. But are we just, I will not say to Jesus

Himself, but even to the facts, if that sums up all we believe about Christ?

The Utmost Love is Divine

Love, in the sense in which we are speaking of it, is precisely what our intelligence and feelings alike tell us is the expression of the character of God. Jesus showed to the world love as it had never been seen before, nor has been since. Must we not hold that the One who so supremely manifested the divine characteristic was thereby stamped as Himself divine? It was this, one thinks, more than anything else, which led His first followers to proclaim His divinity. They were not Gentiles, whose ideas of godhead were loose. They were Jews, soaked in an uncompromising tradition of monotheism. Yet they yielded, not to theory, but to the power of fact, and boldly proclaimed as true that divinity for asserting which Jesus Himself had been condemned by His fellow countrymen for blasphemy.

Some, however, may think that such an argument is a short and easy way of attaching a traditional doctrine to our working creed. Let us see, therefore, whether the facts as a whole can be fully explained apart from belief of some kind in Christ's divinity. We can start where all are agreed: Jesus was truly man. We can take another step which few are likely to challenge, whatever their belief concerning Him, and say He was the greatest of men. Who, then, is the next? Few would care to reply off-hand. Jesus stands alone, 'a unique figure,' as J. S. Mill once put it, so much alone that we do not know in what direction to

look for the next to Him. This is a striking fact, and it seems to indicate that the difference is more than a difference between one human being and another. Rather does it mark the difference between the human and the divine.

Man—and Something More

All, we have acknowledged, agree Jesus was man, and it is scarcely disputed that He was something more than ordinary man. His followers contend that 'something more' is explicable only by saying He is God. No amount of extra genius, spirituality, insight, will account for that difference between Jesus and the others. Consider how truly unique He was. Without exception every man, wise or foolish, is, in greater or less degree, the child of his times. The great-souled Socrates would join in a wine-debauch and drink his companion under the table, whilst he remained sober. Plato sketched a wondrous ideal State, but made provision therein for aggression against its neighbours and for the subordination of its workers to its aristocrats, in the manner his class thought right. Aristotle defended slavery as in accord with nature. Confucius is the essence of the Chinese mind, and the Buddha's philosophy an accentuation of Oriental pessimism. The limits of great men, the influence of their age upon their outlook, are a commonplace. But Jesus shows us a mind that belongs, not to an age, but to all time. His outlook cannot possibly be explained as the product of His environment. Which, for example, of the Rabbis ever dreamt of placing woman on an equality with man? Jesus did. To which of

His contemporaries would it be possible to attribute the Beatitudes? More striking still is the fact that the progress of the centuries, which out-dates so much of the wisdom of antiquity, has not made obsolete a single saying of Jesus. Of no other teacher is that true. St. Paul's teaching, because inspired by Jesus, is wonderfully fresh to-day, but here and there his precepts have become void. Jesus, who gave principles rather than precepts, has been proved by the most severe of all tests, time. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.' It was no boast. Given in Eastern form, adapted to the needs of the first century, the teaching of Jesus anticipates the needs of the twenty-first. It is eternal, and the eternal is the divine.

Again, we are challenged by the sinlessness of Jesus. Of nothing are we more reasonably sure than that those who are spiritually purest are 'conscious most of wrong within.' Jesus, the world's best, gives not a single indication of such consciousness. His words record neither confession of sin nor request for forgiveness for Himself. Still more, although the malignity of His enemies for twenty centuries has striven to criticize His character, the verdict of Pilate has been re-echoed by humanity as a whole. 'I find no fault in Him.' Yet Jesus quietly made or accepted great claims—claims to be divine, claims to exercise the prerogative of God. If they were not true, they were in the most incongruous conflict with His character. If untrue, they show delusion or worse. Yet quick as we are to resent such claims in others, somehow even those who do not accept Christ's divinity do

not criticize Him for asserting it. They feel, it seems, that whether true or not, He at least had a right to make such a claim.

Man's Best is God

If we draw these varied threads together, what are we to say of the point upon which all converge? Must we not ask, If the difference between Jesus and other men is not to be called the measure of the divine, what else is? If God revealed Himself through man—the only way in which revelation could be made wholly intelligible to men—if the divine were to be manifested in the human, what would you expect more than that which Jesus showed? Is there any one who would care to say what better form a divine revelation might have taken? If, then, our idea of the divine in man cannot exceed Jesus, why hesitate to call Him divine?

Early tradition embodied men's sense of the divine in Jesus in the story of His Virgin Birth. There is still much point in the retort once made to the inquiry, 'Would you believe of any boy to-day that he was born of a virgin mother?' 'Yes, if he were another Jesus Christ.' Many modern minds, however, find difficulty in the idea, and unhappily argument centring round this issue tends to obscure the real miracle. Whether you believe in the Virgin Birth or not, the veritable miracle is the uniqueness of Jesus, a uniqueness which marks Him out apart from His times, apart from the limits and frailties of His fellows, a man without peer or parallel. If such a man is not to be called divine, then the only conclusion left to us is that the divine

and the human are separated by an unbridgeable gulf, that the divine which every man can recognize in himself is infinitely farther off from us than it seems to be. That is a melancholy result, and few whose belief in God is based on the witness of their own hearts can accept it. If we believe that

Closer is He than breathing,
Nearer than hands and feet,

why hesitate to acknowledge God as man in Christ?

Doctrine and Fact

To return now to the point which we left when we set out to see the confirming tokens of the divinity of Jesus. Love is the sign of the divine, and the greatest love is the greatest sign. The depth and power of the love of Jesus, the inspiration it has afforded to character, influence, and service, is the sign of His divinity. If Jesus be not God, He has done more than God. The plain truth is that a more godlike influence upon the life of man has been exerted by Jesus of Nazareth than by any conception of God apart from Him. That is why we say that if He be not God, He has done the work of God, and far more than belief in God without Christ has accomplished. Can we consistently refuse to account divine the One who has done more than all else to make man godlike?

The crux of the difficulty with many seems to be, not in accepting the divinity of Christ, but in the obstacles they find in those doctrines, still held throughout Christendom, in which the early Church tried to express its sense of the divine in Jesus. But

is it necessary to belief in Christ's divinity, that it should be embodied even in the magnificent phrases of the Nicene Creed? Our present working creed is experimental rather than dogmatic, and hence we have suggested no formal statement as to the manner of Christ's divinity. We have claimed Him simply as divine. That is because we are much more sure of the fact than of the correctness of any doctrinal expression of it. It is not the acceptance of any doctrine, therefore, that we have urged. Rather has our argument throughout been that the ideal of humanity is more than merely human. In other words, in believing in the deity of Jesus we are expressing our conviction of the unity of the divine and the human, that perfect manhood is Godhead. Whatever be their particular creed, all who know in their own experience the divine believe that the divine and the human are very close kin. Jesus gives us proof of that.

We must, in all fairness, however, recollect that those who deny the divinity of Jesus are as much influenced by dogma as they state believers to be. Their dogmas are, it is true, not embodied in formal creeds, but they exist in the unwritten creeds of science and philosophy. They are represented by presuppositions based on the comparative study of religion, or upon other scientific or metaphysical grounds, which make it seem antecedently incredible that any who was man, however great and good, could also be God. Such presuppositions are pure dogma, and it follows that the opponents are themselves open to the same charge that they bring against the believers. Their dogmas have a scientific savour, but they are not scientific. The

method of science is to base the explanatory hypothesis upon the ascertained facts, and whilst esteeming congruity with other beliefs, it will never distort the facts to harmonize with them. Belief in the divinity of Jesus is offered as the solely sufficient explanation of His uniqueness. If He be unique, it follows that no analogies drawn from others apply. The only way of denying His divinity is to deny His uniqueness. Many have indeed tried to show He was but an unusual man. But the common sense of the civilized world, even of those in Christian countries who profess no discipleship, has set Him in a class apart. In this we have the clearest indication that can be given of His divinity. Indeed, the only proof that it is possible to offer to others lies in His uniqueness. But those to whom Jesus is more than the Jesus of history have inward grounds of belief which cannot be expressed in creed or argument.

The Meaning of Christ's Divinity

Try, then, barring out the dogmas of both sides, to face the question with an open mind. Does not the continuous miracle of the love of Christ find explanation only when we acknowledge Him as God? Leave out the theological issues involved in trying to express the nature of His deity. They are difficult, but the fact is manifest. A scientific spirit does not ignore facts because it cannot find a satisfactory theory to account for them. What matters is not the expression of our faith in Christ's divinity, but the faith itself. That is all important, but not on His account. It is not merely to do justice to Him that we must call Him God.

After all, it is a small thing that He should be judged of any man's judgement. The importance of Christ's divinity is on man's account. It means that there is no barrier between God and man, that man is not the chance product of a blind force, but the child of a heavenly father. What that implies concerning man's origin, destiny, duty, can scarcely be expressed. It makes human life part of a divine fellowship, it gives hope in this life and the next. It guarantees that the ideals of humanity are secure. The divinity of Christ is no theological dogma merely ; it is the expression of the ground in which the deepest hopes of man are set. To believe in love is to believe in Jesus. To believe in Jesus is to believe in love as the very life of God, shared by man.

III

‘I BELIEVE IN FELLOWSHIP, AND THEREFORE IN THE TRINITY’

‘I BELIEVE in Fellowship.’ Indisputably I do. If I have ever had a friend, I must believe in fellowship. Let us try, then, to trace out what is implied by this article of life’s creed. In bygone days it was possible for writers of the temper of Hobbes and Mandeville, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to argue that man was by nature unsociable. ‘All society,’ quoth Master Thomas Hobbes, ‘is either for gain or glory.’ If any one should doubt that such is man’s true character, Hobbes points with a warning finger : ‘When taking a journey he arms himself ; when going to sleep he locks his doors ; when even in his house he locks his chests ; and this when he knows that there be laws and public officers, armed, to revenge all injuries that shall be done him.’ Whilst ants and bees are socially organized by instinct, Hobbes held that human government was just an institution established by men to further their own individual ends. We submit to authority, he contended, to gain protection under which to pursue our own desires.

The new era of thought which followed the

publication of *The Descent of Man* has swept all such whimsical theories into oblivion. We know now that deepest amongst human springs of action lie the elemental instincts, that human society is not based upon a contract deliberately made to further private ends, but upon a natural instinct of mankind ; or, to employ a term fashionable in modern psychology, upon the group-instinct. But the earlier evolutionists also erred. They assumed too readily that the character of Nature was that she was 'red in tooth and claw.' The phrases 'struggle for existence' and 'survival of the fittest' caught and misinformed the popular ear. Second thoughts have led us farther. It is not only the fighting qualities of the animal that minister to its survival. In the simplest unit of social life, the family, we find something very different which is equally essential. For not merely the fierceness of the tiger enables the species to survive ; no less necessary is the tenderness of the tigress towards her cubs. When we consider animals that exhibit the group-instinct we begin to understand something of what co-operation means in evolution. The flock and herd survive, not by fighting each other, but by living as a unit. Here the individual survives because of the whole. Of such type is human society. To believe in fellowship, then, is inevitable. By fellowship man has come to be what he is. Without it the whole human race would disappear. Only a cheap and discredited cynicism suggests that human nature's chief characteristic is selfishness. Human evolution proceeds by conflict, but it also proceeds by co-operation. Life is not only strife ; it is service.

What Religion has Done for Fellowship

Realizing, then, how much fellowship means in the development of man, it is of no little interest to push the matter a step farther, and ask what has stimulated the growth of fellowship in the world. We find that the progress of civilization has been accompanied by a continual extension of the range and use of human intercourse and co-operation. Early man was able to use very little of the resources of the universe, not simply because he lacked the mechanical devices of modern invention, but because he knew so little of the possibilities of co-operation. He hunted his own food, fashioned what clothing or dwelling he possessed, relying solely on himself, or at most on his clan. When man began to work for others, and to rely on others in their turn to supply him, civilization was founded. On that basis its whole structure has been reared. If the family be the primary unit of social life, its expansion into the clan and the tribe forms the next step. The clan is a small fellowship, ruled by its head, co-operating for its own ends, but generally in ceaseless feud with other clans. The tribe and the nation appear first as larger editions of the clan. Social duty and obligation extend only to the boundaries of such a group. Gradually they widen. Many factors helped towards such an extension, but amongst them we must not overlook religion. The Old Testament illustrates this for us. The earliest idea there is of loving one's neighbour and hating one's enemy. But the question 'Who is my neighbour?' is a very old one. In the Mosaic law the stranger, and even the bondman

resident in the community, come in some measure under the protection of the covenant of Israel's religion. Later still the proselyte enters, and claims by adoption what was not his by birth. Thus, as religion becomes international, the sense of fellowship becomes international. We speak to-day of the Muhammadan world, but its bond is not race, nor language, nor sovereignty. It is the bond of a common religious faith. As a matter of historical fact, there is in the world to-day no form of fellowship that can embrace all mankind except that which directly or indirectly has a religious basis.

The Only Basis of Universal Fellowship

This may seem a disputable point. Let us look at it a little more closely. It is true that such ancient thinkers as the Stoics theorized at least upon a citizenship of the world ; that modern minds have looked forward

Till the war-drums throbbed no longer
And the battle-flags were furled
In the Parliament of Man,
The federation of the World;

but, none the less, it is religion more than anything else which has helped to widen the fellowship of kinsfolk towards a true *internationale*. Certainly not all who see such a vision, or work for it, are directly inspired by religious motives, but it is, notwithstanding, a fact that in one religion—that founded by Jesus Christ—the theory and practice of universal fellowship have been taught in a way that no other teacher or movement has ever approached. It is easy to point out how Christian

practice has lagged behind Christian theory in this respect; but when that has been said, it still remains that nothing has done more than Christianity has done to commend and establish fellowship amongst all mankind, and its influence in this respect is far wider than its actual extent.

Must there not be some reason for this? There is, and the reason is that the only basis big enough for universal brotherhood is that afforded by the belief in the universal Fatherhood of God, which Jesus taught. There are many fellowships and brotherhoods amongst men, some international in extent. But it will be seen that they aim at uniting classes who have a common interest, whether the 'workers' or the 'financiers' of the world. None of them is able to transcend all differences of interest and aim amongst men. There is only one common denominator—the universal Fatherhood of God. Upon that alone can one establish a universal brotherhood of man.

If, then, I believe in the fact of fellowship because of the limited fellowship I experience with some, I must admit, if I have at all caught the spirit of fellowship, that its full nature demands that it should link me to every man. My experience of fellowship is like the little pools by the rocks, left as the tide ebbs, each complete with its little barrier of sand around it. When the tide returns, all the dividing ridges are blotted out, and every pool rejoins the undivided ocean. If limited human fellowship is to become universal, it can be so only by reason of being merged in the depths of God, from whom we all come. But when I try to think out what is implied by this, does it not lead me to believe

that if human fellowship, which our Maker has so deeply implanted in our nature, is complete only through His relation to all, and that of each to all through Him, it must represent something which is part of His own nature? In other words, does not belief in human fellowship imply belief that fellowship must belong to the nature of the God who gave us the capacity for it? Some, I know, would scoff at such a suggestion. Yet they do not explain the astounding presumption that a Being by nature unsocial called into existence other beings essentially social, who long not merely for fellowship with each other, but for a fellowship with their Maker. A paradox indeed, if an unsocial God should create beings who desire an experience of which their Maker Himself knows nothing!

Fellowship and the Trinity

The religions of the world have been unanimous in representing deity as social, but Christianity alone has made a serious attempt to provide an intelligent conception of both the unity and the fellowship of the divine nature, in the doctrine of the Trinity. Doubtless one will be told that such a doctrine has no place in 'a working creed,' that it is introduced here only by reason of theological prepossession, that it is a web of obsolete Greek metaphysical subtlety, and so forth. I would ask, however, to be heard first and judged afterwards. I am not stipulating that the doctrine of the Trinity is to be accepted ready-made. If, moreover, it be called incomprehensible, we may understand something at least of its nature by avoiding a philosophical

discussion and asking simply why such a doctrine was ever propounded.

We shall find in the first place that it was an attempt to *explain experience*. The unity of God was a heritage from the Jewish lineage in Christianity. But Christ had appeared amongst men, and under the cloak of His humanity His divinity had gleamed, and His followers said, 'God has been manifest in the flesh.' At Pentecost another great experience came to them, and those who had known fellowship with God as man, realized fellowship with God as Spirit, invisible but real. Experience one must respect. The apostles spoke as they had experienced of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

At first this sufficed. The New Testament uses the three terms, but gives no teaching as to the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit. Later a second urgent need helped to frame the doctrine, the need to *clarify thought*. The problem was this. No refinement of thought could rest satisfied with polytheism. The unity of God was the only view acceptable to reason. Yet undeniable experience pressed upon them the necessity of admitting this, and at the same time doing justice to what they had felt and seen concerning Jesus and the Spirit. They tried to be loyal alike to reason and experience. Their reason told them that God was transcendent, infinitely greater than the creation He called into being. Yet the experience that followed Pentecost had convinced them that He was immanent, within the heart, nearer than breathing, closer than hands or feet. They linked those two great truths by the fact of Christ's incarnation.

Transcendence, they said, is reconciled to immanence by the incarnation—the Father manifest in heaven, His Son manifest on earth, His Spirit manifest in men's hearts.

The Meaning of the Trinity

In cases such as this, when we are doing our poor best worthily to express in human thoughts what we can recognize as a description of God, it would be well if the critics were compelled to work in alternate shifts of criticism and construction. They would do both tasks the better for the experience, and they would find the difficulty of the second made them more sympathetic in the first. One need not count the phrasing or form of the doctrine of the Trinity, as usually accepted, final. A better expression may yet be provided, though it has not appeared on the horizon at present. Until it comes are we not justified in holding in a broad sense the truth conveyed by the doctrine, the enormously important truth that the nature of the Godhead is social, not solitary, that fellowship is represented in the very life of God? It was Descartes who said that it was unwise to pull down the old buildings until something else was ready, and that counsel we may lay to heart here. No criticism of the doctrine alters the fact that it arose, not out of metaphysical niceties or cobwebs of fine speculation, but as an attempt to explain experience. Equally true is it that the doctrine conveys that all-important truth of fellowship in God's nature. When we have criticized the doctrine of the Trinity we have still the task before us of finding a form which shall do justice to both these things. This,

then, is the reply to those who would rule out the Trinity from a working creed. It is included just because it is a working creed. A working creed is not concerned with metaphysical difficulties. It takes the doctrine of the Trinity and accepts it in this sense that it implies fellowship to be the very nature of God.

Beyond this it does not venture. It leaves many questions which are of great interest to speculation on one side. For example, what do we mean by the personality of God or of the Holy Spirit, and what is the relationship between the members of the Trinity? Yet these are less essential than the main idea behind the doctrine—that the differentiation it makes within the Godhead allows us to believe in fellowship as eternal, and consequently gives us an intelligible conception of God as love.

We may now sum up the matter as follows. We started from the idea, or, rather, from the fact of fellowship, and saw that it was integral in human nature; indeed, the basis upon which humanity has developed. In the full sense, fellowship cannot be anything that is limited; it must be wide enough to include all mankind within its circle. Only one basis is wide enough to afford such a possibility, and it is found in the teaching of Jesus concerning the universal Fatherhood of God. This in its turn raises the question whether we must not regard fellowship as belonging not only to the nature of man, but also to the nature of God, for it seems hardly possible to believe that the Creator has given to us a capacity which we recognize as amongst the finest characteristics of human nature, which is unrepresented in the divine nature. This led

us towards that expression of the divine nature as social, which it is possible to defend as truly rational, the Trinity. Polytheism we cannot seriously consider. We saw that the root meaning of the Trinity lies in this thought of fellowship being the nature of God, and in that sense we accept it as an article of our working creed, the ultimate implication of our belief in human fellowship. We have not been determined by any desire to make our working creed conform to the theology of Christianity. We have held to our basis of experience. But, after all, it is not strange that from such a starting-point we should travel in this direction, for most movements of thought follow channels cut by the experience of life, and the thoughts embodied in the central doctrines of all religions will be found to have a basis, not in flights of fancy, but in the facts of life.

IV

‘I BELIEVE IN TRUTH, AND THEREFORE IN THE BIBLE’

I BELIEVE in Truth.’ Since I say that, someone will probably want to play Pilate, and ask, What is truth? Let us, however, leave that question for the present. The world’s philosophers have spent two thousand five hundred years answering it, and have not yet got their answer ready, so it can wait a little longer. But whilst philosophers are discussing the theory of truth we can speak it and know it in practice. If we cannot give a logical definition of truth we have no uncertainty in saying, ‘That is true,’ and ‘That is false.’

I shall now assert that, amongst other things, to believe in truth implies belief in the truth of the Bible. Some will at once protest that this is unjust and unjustifiable, a cool assumption of what should, if it can, be proved. But is not that because the Bible is often confused with claims made on its behalf, or doctrines taught about it? For the purposes of our working creed all such things can be entirely forgotten. We will take the Bible as if we had never seen or heard of it, accepting it merely as what it indisputably is—an historical document, or, rather, a collection of such docu-

ments. If we can at all tell the true from the false we may be able to discover, without accepting either the dogmas of the critics or the anti-critics, in what way the Bible is true. In a court of law the final decision upon the evidence on which may depend the fate of a human life is made by twelve plain citizens. Learned counsel may put first one then the other side of the case before them; the judge sums up, but the last word is with the ordinary man. Why not let it be so here?

Placed before us, then, we find a literature rather than a book, a whole because it is linked by certain common ties and a general continuity, but by no means an organic whole. We examine it, as we have said, as a record of the past, exactly as we might examine the writings of Josephus, Tacitus, or Herodotus.

The Bible as History

We shall find that some parts were written much nearer to the times they record than others, and hence we shall expect that the records are not all of equal value. We shall recollect that it is an Oriental book, and shall expect in it the habits of expression and general outlook characteristic of its time and surroundings. We shall not, therefore, read all with a prosaic Western literalness. We shall remember also that many centuries elapsed between the writing of its oldest and latest books. Like every other historical record, it is not always accurate or consistent in its facts, and its testimony must be sifted by the usual methods of critical investigation. Here we shall need to listen to the findings of the experts. But although we shall

judge some of the record unreliable, the general soberness and reliability of its testimony will be manifest. It is no book of fables. Broadly speaking, the Bible is good history.

We must also remember, in passing our judgement, that the Bible grew slowly into its present form. Those who uphold its infallibility seldom face the question why it should befall that certain books such as Esther and the Song of Solomon are included in Holy Writ, whilst such books as 'The Wisdom of Solomon,' with its magnificent passage, 'The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,' or Ecclesiasticus, or the beautiful little 'Prayer of Manasses,' are relegated to the 'uninspired' Apocrypha. To be consistent they must claim that not only was the Bible infallible, but that the rabbis amongst whom was very gradually settled the Canon of Scripture in the Old Testament were infallible in choosing what to accept and what to reject. It is not even certain that our present Old Testament was canonical in all its books in our Lord's day. Yet if that is so, what right have we to claim that His authority sealed the whole of the Old Testament, and that whatever is contained in it possesses qualities which do not belong to the books of the Apocrypha?

In What Does the Truth of the Bible Consist?

Having admitted all this, what is left of our claim that the Bible is true? To answer this question requires that we should consider for a moment what is implied by the word true. For example, set side by side first of all the statement 'Queen Anne died in 1714'; Browning's line, 'The best

is yet to be ' ; the story of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Are we to insist that the first of these alone is absolutely true ; that the second may be true but is highly doubtful ; that the third is fiction, and not true at all ? Such a criterion would make truth an empty word. Yet many treat the question of the truth of the Bible solely as if it were truth of the first of these types. It is argued by agreement of both friends and foes, as if the proof of the truth of the Bible lay in the accuracy of its science, history, or chronology. Yet it is not easy to understand why revelation from God to man should consist in what is, after all, fragments of the history of a few of the peoples who have formed a small part of the human race, and incidental statements about the creation of the universe. Certainly the revelation of God given by Jesus was not at all of this character, and one might expect that though revelation differs with the capacity of man to receive it, its general character would be the same throughout. But we are learning to regard the question more broadly. We recognize that all that is true is a revelation of and from God, and we feel sure that such revelation cannot be self-contradictory. We view the Bible, therefore, as part—a great and important part—of God's revelation of Himself to man, but we take it not in isolation, but together with the whole system of truth. We no longer imagine that the early chapters of Genesis are to be quoted as evidence against Darwin's doctrine of the descent of man. But we can and should quote the Sermon on the Mount as evidence against the view that man is merely a clever animal and that

his animal nature is real whilst his spiritual nature is a delusion.

The Witness of Experience

We may therefore approach the question of the truth of the Bible from this wider standpoint. The form of thought which appeared to our forefathers as yielding evidence of God started either from Nature, and attempted to pass from design to Designer, or from the Bible, and argued that so good a book must witness to a God who inspired it. The former has been described as 'Building a precarious speculative bridge from the world we see to its unseen author,' and the latter might be described as even more precarious. Belief in God exists unchanged, however. It existed before any one thought of finding reasons to support it, and will exist however often the fashion of those reasons changes. But the modern way of putting the matter is sounder than the older way. The process of evolution out of which have emerged ourselves, our minds, all we have, know, and are, has produced in us and in all humanity a religious experience. We feel that such an experience thus produced is an indication of the nature of the Reality which is the ground of all existence. That is to say, instead of starting from the idea of God and searching the world of experience to justify it, we start from our own experience, and in the deepest meaning of it, indeed as the only explanation adequate for it, we find God.

The connexion between this and the question of the truth and value of the Bible will now become clear. The religious experience of mankind has

produced nothing comparable with the Old Testament even, much less with the New. Carefully selected passages from some of the other sacred books of the East will bear very favourable comparison with it, but, whole for whole, the Bible is easily first. There is far more chaff and far less grain in other sacred literature. The sacred books of all religions contain spiritual truth. The human heart has never sought for God without finding something concerning Him. But the Bible is pre-eminent, not only in spiritual depth, but in moral standard also. Behind its books there is a true experience of God, not complete, nor equal throughout ; rather is it one that grows and develops. But the reality of that experience makes the spiritual truth of the Bible. No man who has a religious experience can read the Bible without discovering how truly it reflects the facts of the life of the Spirit. We believe in truth—not only scientific truth, but spiritual truth—and we find the Bible answers back to the truth revealed in our own experience. The book that does that is true.

What is Truth ?

We may now return to the question we slipped past when it confronted us at the beginning—What is truth ? It may otherwise seem unfair to claim that the Bible is true unless we say in what sense we understand the term truth. Some thinkers have asserted that truth is the *correspondence* of our ideas with reality. That seems a simple, even obvious, solution at first glance. On second thoughts we shall see its difficulty, for our only knowledge of reality is by means of these ideas. We cannot,

therefore, know reality apart from our ideas of it, and compare it with the ideas to see if they are correct, as this view seems to presume. Others, therefore, have declared that truth is *coherence*; that is to say, it lies in the consistency and harmony of the ideas of our minds. This also seems a plausible view, for upon such grounds we are accustomed to judge evidence presented to us as true or false. But second thoughts again present an obstacle. Is rational or logical consistency the only test of what is true? We recollect the celebrated saying, *Credo quia impossibile* ('I believe because it is impossible'). That need not mean that we can accept a manifest contradiction. We cannot. But it may imply that what can be presented as logically consistent is morally and spiritually false. For example, pantheism can be made very attractive rationally. But the conscience of educated races simply refuses to attribute sin to God, as pantheism must imply. Or, again, determinism has many logical advantages against free will, but the latter belief will never be eradicated, for something deeper than reasoning gives us an unescapable sense of being free. The history of thought shows that no belief can maintain itself by mere rational consistency if it conflict with the wider harmony of our moral and spiritual lives. More than that, this view implies that only the whole of truth is perfectly true, for therein alone is complete consistency attained. Yet the whole of truth can never be reached by mortal man.

A third view remains. It asserts that whilst all statements claim truth, their truth is established when we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, or verify the claim, and that this is done by finding

whether they work satisfactorily That does not mean to our own satisfaction, of course. The word must be used in the widest possible sense, and include intellectual, moral, and spiritual satisfaction ; for all our powers, and not merely our reasoning powers, are used in the search for truth, and truth, we must believe, will meet them all. Judged by such a criterion, the Darwinian idea of evolution is more true than the old notion of the separate creation of 'natural kinds,' for in every respect it works better. At first it was loudly proclaimed that it outraged moral and spiritual truth. We now see it does neither, which is fresh illustration of the fact that what is true will satisfy not only our intellect, but every other side of our nature. This theory, too, is charitable. It does not bluntly brand past and bygone beliefs now outgrown as false. Those who do that must wonder how many of our present beliefs, scientific and religious, will be unchanged in a few centuries. It acknowledges them rather as true for their own time—partial truths now replaced by wider views, which meet new factors previously not seen. Without arguing further in this somewhat technical way, let us apply this criterion of truth, which in philosophical terms is called the pragmatic criterion, to the question of the truth of the Bible. We shall see at once how it explains the issue. There were ideas of God, such as the Old Testament shows in its earlier narrative, which were true in this sense: that they worked satisfactorily in their own age and at that level of culture. To-day we do not accept them. They are outgrown, and it is needless to resort to violent expedients to 'harmonize' them with the teaching

of Jesus. But the revelation of God in Jesus is as fully true, and more fully true to-day than it was two thousand years ago. We realize in it depths and meaning which the first century never saw. Every new spiritual and moral advance is seen to be but an application of its principles. Nearly two thousand years ago the teaching of Jesus laid down principles that forbid war. Millions of Christians have lived and fought without realizing that. To-day the conscience of man is slowly realizing that war is a crime. In other words, it is finding out a forgotten truth of the teaching of Christ. 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He shall guide you into all truth.' Those words have been increasingly fulfilled.

Summary and Conclusion

We may now sum up the line of thought which we have followed. We began by dealing with the Bible as ordinary historical documents, and noticed its character as such. We then pointed out that we do not use the word true in such a formal sense that it excludes spiritual truth, even when, as in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, that truth is conveyed by a fable. Refusing to discuss the truth of the Bible as if it were simply a matter of the historical accuracy of any and every event it relates, we saw that just as in our religious experience we are led to God, so that same experience teaches us the truth of the book that so wonderfully fits in with it. Religious experience produced the Bible long ago. To-day it confirms its truth. Questions of scientific and historical truth must be decided by impartial

investigation But the spiritual truth of the Bible is verified in our own experience. We saw that whilst the question, What is truth? was not easily answered, the best answer seemed to be that which held that to be true which in the widest possible sense works satisfactorily. We applied this criterion and saw that there are portions of the Bible which represent a view of God to which the spiritual experience Christ has inspired does not respond. We count such, partial and outgrown views, once true for other days, but no longer satisfactory in view of the wider knowledge with which they cannot harmonize. There are purely historical portions, such as Esther, which may or may not be accurately related. But in the 23rd and 130th psalms, for example, or Micah's cry, 'What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?' the truth shines out before our eyes, and is confirmed in our own hearts. We believe in truth, scientific, moral, spiritual. Wherever we find it we recognize it. Here belief in the spiritual truth of the Bible as a whole is implied by our working creed, for no volume has greater depths of spiritual truth; none has fed more hearts, inspired more lives to good. The pity of it is that for so many devout peoples, as well as for so many sceptics, the truth of the Bible should suggest a controversy rather than a great and ascertained spiritual value. Controversy and the fashion of it passes away, but those who do the will of God abide for ever, and for them the Bible will abide true, because it is the handbook and companion of the deepest spiritual life.

V

‘I BELIEVE IN CONSCIENCE, AND THEREFORE IN SIN’

I BELIEVE in Conscience.’ It is true that one often hears conscience spoken of cynically or disparagingly, but lives there a man who would not feel insulted if he were told he had no conscience? Certainly the average man, whose beliefs form the basis around which the articles of our working creed are being constructed, owns to a conscience. Therefore it is not unjustifiable to say here, ‘I believe in conscience.’

But that does not explain precisely what is meant by conscience. Let us try, therefore, to analyse. It will appear that two things should be distinguished as presupposed when we speak of conscience. First, there is the universal knowledge of a difference between right and wrong, and the sense of obligation to follow the right. The crudest and most savage tribe existent never confuses right and wrong, never holds that their distinction is a matter of no importance. Right and wrong are held apart as unmistakably as light and dark, bitter and sweet. We are not concerned at the moment with the particular things which may be held to be right and wrong. It may well be that

our 'right' is in some parts of the world 'wrong,'
our 'wrong' 'right.'

Still the world is wond'rous large—seven seas from marge to
marge—

And it holds a vast of various kinds of man ;

And the wildest dreams of Kew are the facts of Khatmandhu,
And the crimes of Clapham chaste in Martaban.

That is true, but the point is that, alike at Clapham and Martaban, every man knows there is a right and there is a wrong, and he recognizes, whether or not he obeys, that he *ought* to do the right. The second thing brings us to the point just noticed. In addition to the knowledge of the difference between right and wrong, conscience presupposes some standard of what is right and wrong. This is fixed usually by the traditions, customs, and religion of the peoples concerned, although amongst more developed peoples, individuals may modify traditional standards for themselves. Here we see those great differences between peoples of which Kipling's lines speak. For example, the Dyaks are said to be found by the traveller courteous, hospitable, and kindly, yet they are inveterate head-hunters, murdering men, women, and children in fulfilment of a blood-feud. Their standards count both actions right.

What Conscience is

Having made this distinction, we may now say that conscience is the sense of the agreement or disagreement of one's actions, words, and sometimes even thoughts, with the standard we accept of what is right and wrong. Its power comes

from that universal sense of obligation to follow what is held to be right of which we spoke. Some say that conscience is simply the echo of 'the voice of the tribe' and fear of its judgement. That is a halting explanation. There are scores of old-established social customs which may be broken, yet no one feels any pang of conscience in doing so. If conscience is but the echo of consolidated ages of custom, why not? Slavery is one of the most ancient of customs, and there are slaves born of a long ancestry of slaves. Still one imagines no slave felt any pang of conscience in seeking to be free. Yet if conscience is but the fear of punishment, why not? for punished he knows he will be—brutally, probably, if his master hear of it. But the same slave might well have a conscience that would not let him rob another man. Conscience cannot be said, therefore, to be merely custom or fear of social punishment. It is based on a world-wide sense that some things ought to be, some ought not; even though for millions, custom and tradition decide, often arbitrarily, what these things are.

Is it right, then, to speak of conscience as 'the voice of God'? We have seen at least that it cannot be called the echo of custom or the fear of punishment. It is one thing to say that what is counted right and what is counted wrong depend upon the code and custom of the people concerned, and another to say that the sense of the distinction between right and wrong comes from the same source. The former statement is true, the latter false. The capacity for moral action and the sense of moral obligation belong to the very nature of mankind. We, therefore, attribute them to the

Maker of mankind ; and in this sense conscience is a divine gift to man.

At the same time, this must not be taken to mean that conscience is infallible. Like every good gift it may be misused or disused. Someone has said that God sells all things at the price of labour. That means that God gives freely to man life and the land he lives in, but for the rest man must work, hunt, or till the soil for food, and often too dig his wells for water. Spiritual gifts are similarly of the character of capacities that can be used rather than ready-made and complete facts. Conscience is a capacity. It can be used or abused. We must recognize that it is possible for conscience to err. In New Testament words, the light that is in us may be darkness. A man may tamper with his conscience. Ill-use, neglect, self-interest, prejudice, may derange it. He may then say that his conscience tells him he is right, yet, like an inaccurate watch, it is misleading him. Whilst, then, we respect a man's conscience, we do not admit its infallibility. Like the watch, it may need an overhaul.

It is also possible for conscience to work truly and yet mislead, if it is set to register by a poor and unenlightened standard of right and wrong. The Dyak may be acting conscientiously in head-hunting, but his standard appears to us a very bad one.

It follows, then, that it is possible for a man to act conscientiously and yet wrongly. This is much more common as far as what conscience calls right is concerned, less frequent in what conscience condemns. In this chapter we are touching upon

the testimony of conscience to the fact of wrongdoing, which is a much more manageable subject than the tremendously wide range of actions which the 'vast of various kinds of man' counts right. Further, we are thinking of the conscience of the average man amongst ourselves in a Christian country. In this case, therefore, we need not be troubled with the possibility of conscience calling something wrong when actually the standard by which it works is imperfect. In the teaching and example of Christ, the average man knows at least something of a standard admitted even by Agnostic moralists to be the highest ever given to man. Moreover, even if he has in some ways blunted the fine edge of his conscience, it still tells him often that he does wrong. Therefore we may be certain that if we believe in conscience we are right in accepting its testimony that we do wrong, and are responsible for that wrong-doing.

What Conscience Says

We have, therefore, reached this point. I believe in conscience; it witnesses that I am responsible for doing wrong. Two things follow, necessarily implied by this, namely, sin and moral responsibility for it. It has been said that 'the man in the street' doesn't worry about his sins. If that be so, someone else should. But it is only partly true. In the ancient world the Hebrew took sin seriously, the Greek easily, and the two types are found everywhere still. But though the man in the street does not respond if appealed to in such phrases as 'guilty sinner,' he does know that he is not the man he might be, and in his own way,

sincerely enough, he often wishes he were better. That is his sense of sin, and to do him justice let it be said that usually he frankly admits it is his own fault, that is to say he admits responsibility.

But the theorists find fault far more often than the plain man with the testimony of conscience regarding sin. Some tell us it is *the animal inheritance*, and quote

Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

But, unhappily for this view, no instinct is sinful, and man's animal nature is not any more sinful in him than such nature is in the animal. It is its misuse that constitutes sin. It is a common mistake to hold that the savage is always more sinful than a civilized man. His misdeeds may be grosser, but are by no means always more wicked. He is nearer to the animal nature, but not on that account more sinful. Others are persuaded sin is *negative*, absence of good. But is there not a difference between the absence of a sense of responsibility which makes a careless clerk lose his employer's money, and the absence of a sense of moral responsibility which makes another embezzle it? Both senses of responsibility are to be counted good. If sin is but the absence of good, why then the difference in these cases? Sin is the absence of good, but it is more. It is the presence of something positive and deliberate. Others call sin *disease*, and hold that man cannot be blamed for moral disorders any more than for physical. It might be enough to say that for most physical disorders we and our ancestors are ultimately responsible. But if I am struck down

by disease which is not a consequence of my own action, I may lament the fact, but I feel no remorse. My wrong-doing, on the other hand, prompts in me a wholly different attitude. It is useless to say to *oneself* that sin is only a disease. Keep that theory for the debating society! In his own heart man knows otherwise. We said just now it was the theorists rather than the plain man who found 'explanations' of sin. The ordinary man trusts his own intuitions rather than theory, and believes his conscience when it tells him he has done wrong **and is responsible for it.**

Has Man a Free Will?

Upon the other point, that of responsibility, the theorists also raise objections. 'Is man responsible unless you can prove free will?' is their question. There is always something artificial in the free will controversy, for everybody, even the strictest theoretical determinist, acts and speaks as if he were free, and actions proverbially speak loud. The strength of determinism is the analogy that the material world affords. Yet when we speak of the universal reign of cause and effect in Nature, we do not always realize how we obtained that idea. A moment's thought will convince us that what we actually observe in the external world is that certain things invariably accompany or follow each other. We could not, for example, pick up a material object and say 'This is a cause, you can see it causing!' We know the power of causation only as it exists within ourselves. From our own experience we transfer the idea to the outer world. It is very convenient to do so, but is it not a paradox when

determinists, in spite of this, try to persuade us that the notion of causation which we obtain from our own will and import into nature, is true in nature but not in our will?

The deepest objection to determinism, however, is that it stultifies the whole of our experience. If it is objected to the determinist that the wrong-doer cannot help doing wrong, and, therefore, ought not to be blamed, he smiles and replies 'But equally we cannot help blaming him. Both the wrong and the blame are determined alike.' On this account it is sometimes urged that determinism makes no practical difference. Is this true? Does it not reduce mankind to marionettes and this real life to a puppet-show? Against such a conception who would not be a rebel? Must we not declare for conscience and common sense against the sophistry of determinism?

One other position must be considered before we pass on. It is expressed by Omar picturesquely :

O Thou who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with predestination round
Enmesh me, and impute my fall to sin.

'God made me frail and put me into a world of temptations. Is He not therefore responsible for my fall?' So runs the plea. Would any one argue that because God has placed us in a climate where every summer heat may prove fatal, and every winter cold, we must die and He be responsible? The obvious answer is that God has given us the means of defeating the extremes alike of cold and of heat. Is it not equally true that we have the

power to resist temptation, and that for our fall we are responsible ourselves?

The efforts, then, of those who would make excuse are insufficient. We are left with the position from which we started. I believe in conscience, and therefore I believe that I am responsible for the wrong I have committed. We can go on, therefore, to ask what the nature of wrongdoing, or sin, may be. In doing so, we may confine ourselves to *personal* wrongdoing. Whatever may be said of the dogma of original sin, no man's conscience accuses him of being guilty on account of what his forebears did. Nor can such teaching be said to have been given by Jesus. It is to personal wrongdoing that conscience testifies, and its testimony takes the form of the sense of shame and of remorse.

Shame is something which belongs to man alone. It cannot be said in any proper sense to be exhibited by an animal. Its significance lies in the fact that is embedded in the old story of Eden. There Adam is represented as ashamed because he was naked. Behind that lies a great truth. Why is man so ashamed? Naked came he into the world and naked goes he out. It is as he was made. Yet the well-nigh universal sense of shame that cloaks the intimate, though necessary, functions of the body, reveals the fact that man is conscious of a higher nature in comparison with which his animal body appears gross. The interest of the sense of shame to us here is its witness to man's belief in a higher and a lower nature in himself, and that is shown not merely by shame of the sinful, but by shame of the fleshly.

Equally significant is the sense of remorse. It is wholly different from the sense of annoyance which accompanies our mistakes. It is the testimony of our conscience not merely to the fact that we ought not to have done wrong, but that we *need not* have done so. Indeed remorse is perhaps the strongest witness that experience yields to the freedom of man's will. If man is so constituted, as determinists say, that he cannot do other than what he does, remorse seems inexplicable, a sense that never should have developed.

Sin is Selfishness

If we carry our analysis of the nature of wrongdoing a step further, we shall see that shame and remorse unite in showing us its character. Shame, we said, shows us two natures. Remorse shows us two selves—the self that did the wrong, and another self we might have been which would not have done so. This is implied by our belief that we need not have fallen into the wrong. The essence of sin, therefore, is selfishness, for selfishness means always choosing the lower self instead of the higher. No man who has listened to the voice of conscience but knows how true it is that he has these two selves, like Jekyll and Hyde, at variance within. St. Paul's words 'For the good which I would I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I practise,' are a fragment torn out of every man's biography. There are two selves, and all wrong is giving way to the lower self, that is to say, a form of selfishness.

Our working creed, then, acknowledges the fact of sin. We have ceased to use theological terms in

common speech as our forefathers were accustomed to do, but is our experience actually different from theirs? They spoke of 'mourners convinced of sin'; the modern man means much the same when he says to himself 'I'm a "rotter" and "fed up" with myself.' It is impossible to be an honest man and to deny the patent fact that none of us is what he should be, and, what is more, what he might be. But just as a man knows often he is physically not fit, but lets things slide if they are not very bad, so, spiritually, he may act in the same way. Yet in each case, would he but wake to the fact, there is a remedy. What that remedy is we shall see in our next chapter.

VI

‘ I BELIEVE IN HOPE, AND THEREFORE IN SALVATION ’

‘ I BELIEVE in Hope.’ Perhaps someone will object to the claim that this is a clause in every man’s creed, because pessimists are met with, both in person and in philosophy. We must face the pessimist, therefore, to see whether he can prohibit the statement ‘ I believe in hope.’

Pessimists there may be, but they are made, not born. Pessimism is an acquired, not a natural habit of mind. Despite differences in temperament, was there ever a pessimistic child? Pessimism is a disease of the adult mind, never of childhood. It is caused surely by early optimism being disappointed, its milk soured by the tossings of some rough passage through life. Some to whom this befalls, declare they will defeat disappointment in future by anticipating the worst. In the words of a homespun proverb they ‘ cut off the nose to spite the face ’ ; to avoid a possible disappointment, they fly to an attitude of perpetual disappointment. In doing so they abandon what is, perhaps, the sweetest of all joys, happy expectancy. Still, even so, does not their pessimism bear witness against itself? The pessimist avows he expects the worst. Yet is he not secretly staying himself by the thought

that, since he has prepared for the worst, he therefore cannot be disappointed, but may, on the contrary, find things better than he anticipated? What is that but hope? Perhaps the pessimist, then, unmasked, is after all but Hopeful in disguise. I know those who plan the family budget a quarter ahead, and allow big estimates of expenditure, so that the balance appears likely to be small by the quarter's end. Yet actually they think such a course will tend to check extravagance, and also, since the big estimates are seldom reached, will give a much better balance than appeared possible, and a gratifying sense of having saved money! Most so-called pessimists are those who budget for life much on the same principle, and their profession of pessimism is largely a pose.

So much for the practice of pessimism. The theory is not more consistent. Some of the great Eastern religions, notably Buddhism, are said to be pessimistic. They certainly enlarge on the unhappiness of life. Yet they denounce as futile the obvious escape from an existence which is misery that suicide offers. They assert that those who thus try to escape involve themselves in other and worse existences by rebirth.

It still remains, however, that unless in a new existence the individual is in some sense the same, and can recollect his previous existences, a thing this teaching does not suggest, there is no point in calling the new existence *worse*, and suicide would at least end his present miseries. Clearly, then, as indeed other facts show, such pessimism is a theoretical attitude merely. Moreover it does not debar hope, for the goal of deliverance, *Nirvana*,

is the end set before the devotee. Eastern religions, then, do not contradict the broad fact that mankind hopes. Nor does Western pessimism. Its chief exponent was Schopenhauer, whose life was a flagrant contradiction of his creed, a fact he coolly acknowledged. Needless to say, then, he was a lone star, and, like other pessimists, founded no school. If we judge from the logical point of view, it is possible to argue plausibly in favour of pessimism. But life rather than reasoning contradicts it, and that the vast bulk of humanity refuses to accept the creed shows that there is a firm foundation, even in the mingled bitter and sweet of life, for hope. We are surely justified, then, in denying that pessimism, inconsistent as it always is, can veto the general statement that men believe in hope. To look ahead beyond the evil and sorrow of the present to some better thing is characteristic of human nature.

Hope is for One Thing Only

If, then, hope is an article in every man's creed, for what do we hope? The answer is that we hope for one thing only, for the best. We hope that this or that may happen, but always because we think it will be best. Our more immediate hopes, perhaps, are for the best for ourselves, for those we love, for our work or cause. Yet few can be so selfish as to grudge the hope that it may be also the best for all. Moreover, to long-range thinking it appears evident that in the last resort the universal and the individual good will coincide. If we hope for the best, what is truly to be called best must surely be the widest possible good. We may, therefore, hold that ultimately the object of hope is the universal

good. Such hope will lead us back to the first article in our Creed, where we saw that goodness implies God. God represents the basis of such hope, its only sufficient guarantee.

The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
Turns ashes—or it prospers ; and anon
Like snow upon the desert's dusty face,
Lighting a little hour or two, is gone.

That was said of the *worldly* hope, and truly said. It has never been true of the higher hope, the hope based on the goodness of God. That holds when all other hope goes.

We have seen that mankind as a whole holds fast to hope. We have also seen that the object of hope is the best, and that such hope is based well only when founded on the goodness of God. The next step is to notice that since the best is not yet with us, though we believe 'the best is yet to be,' hope means the hope of change, of progress, of some better thing. How, then, is the best to be reached? Even if our belief in its realization is based on God's goodness, there is no evidence that He has so constituted the world that the good grows steadily and automatically. Rather does the history of moral evolution show ebb and flow, up-grade and down-grade periods. It is not usually realized that the belief in progress is comparatively modern. It is due in part to the rapid development of science in the past century, and in part also to the theory of evolution, aided by the misbelief that evolution and progress are the same. The ancient world as a whole knew no belief in progress. It was often held

that the universe ran through cycles of activity to destruction, and that it was renewed to start again on the same meaningless round. Even the opinion of early and mediaeval Christianity saw little hope for the world.

The world is very evil,
The times are waxing late ;
Be sober and keep vigil,
The Judge is at the gate.

We are by no means entitled, therefore, to the easy assumption that process and progress mean the same. Nearly two thousand years ago the world was in the trough of the wave. Roman moralists said that posterity could but imitate, not surpass, the vices of their day. Josephus called his own generation the wickedest yet known. Yet out of the darkness came a sound, like the bird's note that heralds the dawn, 'The darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth.' It was the cry of a Babe in the manger at Bethlehem. That marked the turning-point in the world's history. There is a profound significance in the fact that we reckon our calendar as B.C. and A.D. The new era of time began at Bethlehem. Since then there has been a development which has been progress. Irregular, checked, turned back again and again ; none the less the persistence of the ideals of Christ has asserted itself against every obstacle, rising still, and still to rise.

Hope and Salvation

In the light of this, we may see what is implied by calling Christ the Saviour. We must not interpret

too narrowly the salvation Christ brought. For some Christians it means simply a change in the individual's life, and one fears that some cannot recognize even this, should it not happen in accordance with conditions and doctrines sanctioned by the sect to which they belong. But salvation, whilst it certainly does signify that of individuals, has other and wider meaning. It means an open road for humanity, an avenue that leads to the Land of Promise, where man's highest possibilities can be fulfilled. We begin to see at this point, reason why belief in hope should imply belief in the salvation given through Christ. We have said that hoping for the best involves basing our hope on the goodness of God. Yet we saw that the history of the world yielded no sure indication of progress. None the less our hope of progress is not without a divinely given ground. The coming of Christ was a token that God enters into partnership with man for the attainment of man's utmost good. The realization of that good can come only by the ideals and spirit of Christ. Because I believe in hope, hope of the best for all, I believe in Christ as Saviour of the world.

If we are to claim that, because we believe in hope we must believe in Christ as the world's hope, it implies that there is no other hope but in Him. Those who are opposed to Christianity will deny this. Others will think it doubtful. But if we face the matter squarely, where else is the world to look for improvement? It is not merely that no other religion but Christianity is possible for the civilized world. Even more remarkable is the fact that all our highest ideals are connected with

principles that Jesus taught. It was said that the War proved that modern man was just the primitive savage educated. It certainly proved that education alone does not transform men morally. But whatever may be said of the cruelty of war, it still remains that in the Great War, ideals were manifested that no previous war had shown. Thousands, perhaps millions, fought, believing they fought to end war. It was neither mere prudence nor sheer exhaustion that tried to build, and in some part has built, upon the ruins of the battlefield the League of Nations. It was a shamed sense, stirring in those who had looked upon the faces of the slain, of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. It was not the facts of the war, but its ideals, that showed progress, and those ideals were inspired by Jesus.

Our claim that in Christ lies the world's hope is not refuted by the fact that amongst us live men of high character who repudiate Christianity. Is there a single man of such character who repudiates the principles Christ taught? That is the real test. There are certain living organisms which science calls parasites, maintaining an independent existence within the blood of another organism. Independent they are, yet they draw all their sustenance from their host and perish when it perishes. Using the term in the scientific and not in a discourteous sense, it may be said that those who in Christian lands repudiate Christianity are none the less 'parasitic' upon it. Their ideals have been drawn from it, and would perish if Christianity perished.

We come back again, then, to the position we have adopted. To believe in hope is to believe in

progress. No form of progress ranks as high as moral progress. For two thousand years the mainspring of such progress has been the teaching of Jesus, its inspiration His spirit ; for Him and His ideals no substitute whatever has been found. So far from having surpassed Him we are still painfully toiling upwards after Him. In Christ, and in Christ alone, can the highest type of human progress be achieved.

Facts are More than Theory

We have reached the position, then, that to say I believe in hope, that is, to hold that there is a future of happiness and progress open to the individual and the race, implies that we believe also in Christ as the Saviour who makes this possible. Our working creed is practical, not theological, and we can hold what we have stated without being challenged to produce a theory of the Atonement. It is enough for us to know that by His earthly life, by His freely giving Himself up to die, and by His life in the Spirit amongst men, Jesus has exerted and still exerts the power that alone can save the world. The practical man has generally to accept the facts and use them, leaving the explanation to the experts. It is as possible to do this in religious as in other matters. Theories of atonement are usually concerned with attempting to connect the forgiveness of sins with the death of Christ. What we are concerned with is that, by the life and death and the risen life of Christ, an open door to an open future has been given to mankind. It is a poor gratitude for the gift to overlook the fact because it is difficult to decide how it can be explained by us. Rather should we take the gift for use, thanking

God that however given, by it comes to us the chance of fulfilling the highest hopes we can hold for man and society.

As far as we individually ^{are} concerned, the heritage Christ has given to us means that our hope of being what our best self tells us to be is made possible by adopting the teaching and spirit of Jesus as the rule of our life. It is not so much a question of stating that, years ago perhaps, we were 'saved,' but rather whether such salvation is still in working order, whether every day and in every way we are masters of our lower self, of our pride, prejudice, passion, of the mean and unworthy. At our best we hope to be self masters. If Christ is truly our Master, we shall be.

With regard to the heritage Christ has given to humanity, it is likely that in a few more centuries the whole world will profess Christianity. Not one of the ancient religions of Europe has succeeded in maintaining itself against Christianity. Of the great religions of the East there does not seem any that will be able to resist the slowly but surely dissolvent influences of education and civilization. It is historically true that Christianity is the only religion that has shown itself able to advance with the advance of thought. But even when the world professes Christianity it will not necessarily be a saved world. Only when the Sermon on the Mount is obeyed, when men follow, and not merely flatter, the Beatitudes, can there come days in which the highest hopes we now dimly foresee for humanity will be realized. To many this vision of a moral resurrection seems like an idle tale, and the cynical shrug their cold shoulders. But had they lived in

the palaeolithic age and been told of the present century, they would have done the same. After what we have seen, most of us are unwilling to set any limit to material progress. Why, then, set limits to moral progress? Our shallow friend, 'the man of the world,' may wag his head knowingly and declare these fine ideals are all very well, but practical people have to deal with human nature as it is. No one did that more thoroughly than Jesus. No one has spoken more clearly than He of the evil that lies in the heart of man. But at the same time Jesus believed in what the man of the world forgets, human nature as it may be. Perhaps the greatest compliment ever paid to humanity was His assumption that the Beatitudes were possible to it. Those who prefer to see human nature from the standpoint of the One who knew it best, are under no illusion as to what it is, but they will accept no limit as to what it may be, to the moral not less than to the material future of man.

If, then, I believe in hope, I also believe in the salvation of humanity through Jesus Christ. One thing remains to be said. A belief is what you act upon. When no action follows there is little belief. If then we believe in the moral and spiritual redemption of mankind we must act upon our belief. This means we must be content to live and work for an ideal we shall not live to see fulfilled, satisfied to sow and not to reap, to prepare and not to inherit. Such is the highest type of service and the hardest. To be willing to undertake it is the test of the measure of our unselfishness. Some may think it too much to ask. Yet naturalists describe the way in which certain insects prepare

for the feeding of larvae that are never hatched until after the parent's death. If the Creator has made service for the future an instinct in some of His lowliest creatures, can His highest handiwork be incapable of doing as much? Hope which frees man from the tyranny of time and makes him the heir of eternity, which opens to him the wide-range life far beyond the limits of his earthly existence, is a possession for which no price can be too great. The price we must be ready to offer is the willingness to live ahead of our own lifetime, and prepare for a future beyond us, towards which, past our last resting-place, the host of humanity shall march surely.

VII

‘I BELIEVE IN POSSIBILITIES, AND THEREFORE IN PRAYER’

‘I BELIEVE in Possibilities.’ Indeed, our last subject, Hope, almost implies this, since a fatalistic creed which denies that possibilities can exist affords small foothold for hope. At most, hope can be but precariously poised on one’s ignorance of what is fated. But the average man is no fatalist ; and even those who are such in theory contradict, even as do the pessimists, theory by practice. The theology of the Muhammadan, for example, is fatalistic ; and this may be one reason why Islam and progress have never been permanent partners. None the less, despite ‘ Kismet,’ we find the believer and his Quran both use the language of freedom ; and, like our own determinists and rigid Calvinists, the followers of the Prophet cannot help acting as if they were free. Indeed, in so far as belief may be said to be that which we act upon, there was never yet a consistent believer in fatalism. Most of us, however, decline the idea of life as ‘ the dull rattling off of a chain forged innumerable ages ago.’ We know intuitively that we are not marching round the exercise-ground of a prison universe, but cutting a new trail into an open future. In other words, we believe in possibilities.

Prayer and Freedom

Therefore we should believe in prayer. One might almost say we do ; for how many men could declare that they have never prayed and never believed in prayer? But, leaving that apart, why should our belief in possibilities lead us to believe in prayer? Because, since possibilities imply freedom, and the open character of the future, could a God who is good give man the wonderful though most dangerous gift of self-determination, and yet provide no means of guidance as to its use? If so, freedom would be a curse, not a blessing. Where there is no freedom, there is no need for guidance.

Look up to heaven ; the industrious sun
Already half his race hath run.
He cannot halt nor go astray ;
But our immortal spirits may.

The universe is strictly determined, and can do only that which its Maker has appointed. Animals, guided by instinct and experience, also do what the Creator made them to do. Man alone possesses the terrible power of refusing to do the will of God. Since, then, man alone has the power to go astray, he alone needs, and apparently alone possesses, the power to pray, which means the ability to keep in touch with God's will. Prayer is the necessary sequel to freedom.

Whilst not all who believe in freedom believe in prayer, none the less, for those who believe that God is good, the conception of freedom logically leads to belief in prayer. Imagine a group of workmen, fully equipped with tools and materials, being asked what they have been sent to do, and replying that

their emphasis has not been put in this way but goes to numerous and replies to no question. We should conclude that the man was mad. We easily cannot charge our Maker with a similar act of folly. Without possibilities prayer for guidance would be needless, for we could not derive from the transcendent past, and even prayer as compensation would seem superfluous, for what value could there be in compensatory behavior? But the fact that we had ourselves placed upon this earth, with its materials out of which we constructed our future as our own future, makes it imperative to believe that a God who is good and wise could not let a creature neglected and abandoned. If we can think rightly at all, if we can make at all our life, if possibilities exist, then it surely follows that a source of direction must be provided for us that makes the best advised in prayer.

Prayer From a Prayer

It will help us in facing the question raised by belief in prayer, if we use these truths as history. It has been suggested that possibly advanced prayer developed from unadvanced prayer. Yes, though prayer and unprayer are related, still sometimes prayer is as necessary to us as that prayer develops from unprayer. It may not be the right and the wrong method side by side, and a long process is needed before the right emerges from the wrong. But what we can prove what we have been proved—that prayer came into being before religion—we have at ground for thinking that gods developed into

prayers. It is much more probable that the earliest forms of prayer were just expressed wishes for material goods, like the child's 'I want.' In these, of course, self comes foremost, and the gods when invoked are a means towards fulfilling what the self requires. But just as the child's early demands will some day become transformed into that more intimate fellowship where parent and child can plan together for the best, so, too, prayer develops from sturdy petition to close communion. The original attitude becomes reversed in the process. It is no longer 'What I want,' but rather 'What Thou wilt.' God has come to be first, and self the means of fulfilling what God requires. When this stage is reached, prayer is perfected.

Problems Raised by Prayer

If we pass on now to the problems raised by prayer, we shall see that most of them belong to those lower stages where prayer is still looked upon as a means of getting material benefit rather than spiritual instruction. Yet, even so, the assertion that definite 'answers' cannot be expected, since the physical universe at least is pre-determined by fixed laws, is simply to beg the question. It assumes off-hand that God's actions are as much enclosed within the time-process as our own, which is the very point to be proved if this objection is to be valid. Who, after all, is to say that our 'then' and 'now,' 'before' and 'after,' apply to the Divine Consciousness? It may be that prayer and answer, and the whole process of the universe implied therein, are without order in time, as God sees things. There are other objections to

prayer for material benefits ; but in all fairness we must not allow the question to be foreclosed on such grounds as these.

It is more to the point to say that we who ask do not know what we need, but only what we want. To this, of course, the reply is that, in its higher expressions, prayer is taking counsel with God rather than petitioning Him, and is therefore asked in harmony with what God orders. To pray, for example, for a reversal of the laws of nature must appear from this standpoint to be illegitimate ; for they represent regular and known expressions of God's will. At the same time it is possible to push this standpoint to an unjustifiable extreme. Some have argued that, since the goodness of God wills what is best, all petition is superfluous in prayer. The answer to this is that the higher type of character is that which is self-determined voluntarily to seek good, and that no choice is truly moral choice which is not also free. Our belief in the existence of possibilities seems to indicate that God thinks thus, and hence allows room for self-determination by leaving our future open for us. In that case it is surely better, whilst asking to be guided therein, that we should be able to make our own choice, rather than that our good should be ordered for us whilst we passively accept it. If God allows us choice, we may be sure we are meant to choose.

The Verdict of Mankind

The deeper issue, however, is this. Few who have thought things out can be anxious that prayer should mean that we may ask and obtain any particular

end we desire. Realizing our limited outlook and profound ignorance of what is best, we may well be content to ask for what seems to us the highest and most unselfish, and leave the final answer to God. What we should above all desire in prayer is the assurance that God hears, however He may reply. In this sense the problem of prayer is that of religion as a whole, and the religions of mankind are unanimous in declaring that their appeal to the Divine, however they may conceive of God, is not unheeded. We must respect that declaration. To repudiate it must necessarily destroy our faith in the reliability of human testimony as a whole ; for if the human race, which is, and always has been, religious, has been deluded in its fundamental religious belief, what other belief of humanity can stand ? If we cannot trust the verdict of the consciousness of mankind as a whole, upon what basis can we hope to build ? But the problems of prayer, however difficult to meet intellectually, are answered in practice by the unanimous belief of the religions of mankind from the beginning till now that prayer ' works ' ; that is to say, it produces what otherwise does not come into being.

The Efficacy of Prayer

Practice, therefore, answers theory. Although prayer, like all of the deeper things in life, raises problems, it would be a poor account of prayer that embraced only these. Let us turn to the positive side, and see what prayer does produce. Those who are sceptical regarding prayer have a right to ask those who believe in it what it accomplishes for them. Now, those who pray in the best sense do

not ask or expect especial divine favours in reply. To them it would be a sacrilege to commend prayer as a means of obtaining such things. But, none the less, the results of prayer are manifest, writ large in their lives ; for true prayer is creative, and its creation is unmistakable.

In some part it may be seen in the body. The efficacy of prayer amongst the recognized agents in healing is being explored to-day after many centuries of neglect. But the soul is more than the body, and the spiritual effects of prayer are creative of the best type of personality. One often notices that education alone does not give that indefinable but unmistakable mark which stamps out a strong personality. Yet a 'man of prayer,' however rugged and illiterate, always possesses it. If prayer be indeed contact with God, we understand why this is so. It means that prayer has brought his life under divine influence, so that he has become what God has made of him. A self-made personality usually reflects little credit on its maker. Prayer seems to do for the soul what training does for the body. The trained man stays, whilst the untrained man breaks down under strain. To live with the sense of fellowship with a Supernatural ally cannot fail to make a difference to a man's life. We have only to ask if we can imagine that the character of Jesus could have been produced without prayer, to see what prayer did for Him, and through Him for all humanity. Amongst those things which have inspired men to live and work and endure for their ideals, which have prompted them to self-sacrifice and devotion to others, which have sustained and comforted them under adversity and trouble, none

is greater than prayer. It may be argued that prayer is mistaken ; but it is incontestable that, apart from it, humanity could never have been what it is.

The Effects of Prayer

Equally marked are the effects of prayer upon fellowship. The command to pray for one's enemies is usually expounded as being a beautiful and unselfish precept. Not less, however, is it the greatest safeguard against the danger of an enemy. The real danger of having an enemy is not the harm he may do to us, but the harm he may make us do to ourselves—the bitterness, malice, and unworthiness he may stir up in us. Those who pray for their enemies are effectually safeguarded against that. They are not prevented thereby from safeguarding themselves against the harm the enemy may do them, but they are shielded against the harm he may make them do to themselves.

Not less is the effect of prayer upon friendship. A favourite childhood hymn remarks somewhat sententiously, ' Earthly friends may fail or leave us ' ; and few of us have not felt how deeply the jagged edge of a broken friendship can cut. Friendship is a spiritual tie. A bad man has companions rather than friends ; for service, sacrifice, and love are needed for true friendship. Friendships that are anointed with the chrism of prayer are lifted above earth, and take rank amongst things heavenly. Still more, prayer leads to a fellowship far wider than that between individuals. It may seem impossible in any true sense to love all men, the great mass of unknown humanity. Yet those who bring humanity

within the circle of their prayer achieve this ; for nothing that is a matter of sincere prayer remains a matter of indifference. In ways like these, then, prayer makes its presence felt in our lives. It is a pity that prayer is so often associated only with definite requests made upon bended knees. It includes 'the lost art of meditation,' and those sacramental silences in which, knowing not what to ask, we lift up the whole matter unto God, and leave it unspoken before Him ; and not less the times when facing the glories of the sunset, or alone under the silent stars, we feel the presence of God and worship without words. Prayer means the attitude of mind to which things spiritual are intensely real, and in such a sense it represents the temper in which we live rather than any definite act. In this sense we have used the term here. Starting from the belief that life held out open possibilities, we have seen that, if we take life seriously, we dare not face its possibilities unguided, and prayer is a spiritual sense of direction.

The Art of Prayer

It remains only to add that, though prayer be a birthright refused to none, effectual prayer is none the less an art. If prayer be the divine lever that removes mountains, there may still be an art in applying power at our end of it. The first requisite of effectual prayer is that we identify ourselves with our aspirations. Prayer must possess us before we can possess its fruits ; it must lay hold upon the offerer before it can lay hold upon the object. It must be absolutely *bona fide* in intention, or else it may simply be a means of sublimating our higher

impulses by giving them verbal expression in prayer instead of outward expression in act. Such prayer is wholly harmful. St. Augustine tells us that he prayed for deliverance from sins that he had no intention of abandoning. A modern psychologist would be the last to charge this to conscious hypocrisy. He would see in it the example of the same tendency which, working in the opposite direction, causes people who never commit crime or unchastity to revel in reading details of such. In each case a certain side of our nature, the higher or the lower, craves expression in thought which is denied it in act.

Paradoxically, but truly, the second essential in the art of prayer is to eliminate oneself from one's prayer : paradoxically because we have just said we must identify ourselves with our prayer ; yet truly because our real self is that within us which is centred outside of our personal interests. The selfish man has no power with men, and he cannot have power with God. The prayers that move within the narrow circle of our own needs and desires, that seek what are never given, private blessings, that pray without praising, are just so much waste of the power of prayer. The promise that our prayers are to be asked subject to God's will does not mean that God is an autocrat who must come first, but that a prayer asked irrespective of the Will which wills the good of all men is thereby stamped as a profane and selfish prayer. Since every prayer we offer must bear upon others in ways more numerous than we can ever conceive, we dare not pray except we leave it to the Universal Will that seeks the universal good, to decide how

the prayer shall be fulfilled. But those who have learned to pray in the manner that can both identify the self with the prayer and eliminate it from the prayer will, come what may, continue to believe in prayer.

VIII

‘I BELIEVE IN GRATITUDE, AND THEREFORE IN WORSHIP’

I BELIEVE in Gratitude.’ I cannot help doing so, because every healthy conscience recognizes certain obligations in life as universally binding. A debt must be repaid, a duty must be fulfilled, a promise must be kept, but most of all we feel we must respond to an act of grace. We cannot even allow a small favour or a passing courtesy to go without acknowledgement. We rightly esteem it the depth of meanness to receive a kindness and evince no gratitude. The very kinship in etymology between the words ‘grace’ and ‘gratitude’ betokens their relation in actuality. Grace calls for gratitude, and no gratitude is more necessary than that called for by some unmerited favour.

Gratitude and Worship

Because I believe in gratitude I must believe in worship, for worship is essentially an act of gratitude for the goodness of God. The view that worship arose out of fear is as old as the ancient Greeks, but it carries little credit to-day. Awe, rather than fear, represents the primitive religious emotion, and awe is a compound blending wonder and the sense of self-abasement with fear. As man’s

conception of his relationship with the gods deepened, other elements became prominent ; gratitude, and even love. To-day the Christian conception of God affords small place for fear. That is an emotion of which the perfect manhood of Jesus shows not a single trace. Is that not a token that it should be banished from our minds, save, perhaps, only the fear of being unworthy of the love of God? Christian worship is in no sense stimulated by fear, still less by self-seeking motives. Its essence is gratitude. There may be worship without petition, but never worship without praise.

No one who believes in God—and there are very few human beings who could honestly declare they do not believe in God in any sense—can deny that His ways with man call for a response of gratitude from us. Must we not thank God for *life*? True there are times and moods in which we complain of the burden of life. The Old Testament itself expresses such sentiments on occasion, and perhaps the supreme saga of pessimism is James Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night' :

O Brothers of sad lives ! They are so brief ;
 A few short years must bring us all relief ;
 Can we not bear these years of labouring breath ?
 But if you would not this poor life fulfil
 Lo, you are free to end it when you will,
 Without the fear of waking after death.

My Brother, my poor Brothers, it is thus :
 This life holds nothing good for us,
 But it ends soon and nevermore can be ;
 And we knew nothing of it ere our birth,
 And shall know nothing when consigned to earth ;
 I ponder these thoughts, and they comfort me.

The beauty of the verse as verse is obvious, but Thomson is seldom read. His lyre is not in tune with our experience. Even when we are most inclined to bewail life, instead of taking the freedom to 'end it when you will,' we cling to it as a supreme good. No doubt animal instinct has something to do with this; but instinct alone would not make human beings cling to life if they did not find it good to live. As a matter of fact, the very self-preserving instincts themselves are witness, for the fulfilment of any instinctive activity brings a certain happiness. Bitter and sweet is human life; but George Borrow's 'Life is very sweet, brother,' is an epitome of most human experience, and we thank God that we live.

The Sense of Beauty

Not less, perhaps, should our gratitude be for the sense of beauty. There is no *necessity*, from the biological standpoint, for a sense of beauty; the explanation of brilliant plumage, for example, as designed to attract the bird's mate is not very convincing when we realize that in other cases no such attraction is provided or needed. From the point of view of survival of the organism it would seem that human beings could have been made as unappreciative of the beauty of a sunset as the cattle are. But that the Creator has so attuned our senses and the physical universe that we are able, not merely to see light and colour, stars and sunsets, not merely to hear harmony, but to appreciate them all, is surely a call for gratitude. Equally a superfluity, from a strictly biological standpoint, is a sense of humour, and the gift of laughter which

the animal world does not at all share. Yet they add far more than we can measure to the joy of life. Only a good God could have bestowed on man a sense of fun, and for this good gift we must needs thank Him.

Above all else, for man's capacity for things spiritual, for friendship and fellowship, for art and music, for faith which is a form of second sight, for hope which delivers us from the tyranny of time and sets us amongst the things eternal, for love, 'the greatest of these,' and for the comfort of a religious faith, do we acknowledge our gratitude.

All this unites to indicate that the man who cannot thank God for life and what life contains has neither sought nor found the best things. Those to whom life appears a vast disappointment are those who have sought for values that have no intrinsic worth. They get their apples of desire, and behold they turn to ashes in the mouth. The most profoundly true paradox of the Sermon on the Mount is that the meek inherit the earth. Since 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,' those who live in the spirit of the earth's Owner share His ownership. The worldling laughs at the idea of the meek inheriting the earth; but when the books of life are made up, it will be made manifest that those who sought the highest values in life found the greatest joy. The best life has to give is singularly independent of circumstances. It can be enjoyed by those who have never had the chance to look down the vista opened by any form of scholarship, who have neither wealth nor leisure who even have had health denied to them. The lesser goods of life are largely connected with the

possession of such things. The greatest good is independent of them all, for 'the kingdom of heaven is within you.' To taste life and call it good demands no spurious optimism that turns a blind eye to the other side. It can see life broadly and with the long-range view, and thank God for the gift.

Public Worship

It would seem, then, that a sense of gratitude for the goodness of God demands some response on our part, and that response we may identify with worship. No defender has ever arisen to justify those forgetful nine who, cleansed of leprosy, did not stop to render thanks. Yet, to hope that God will come into our house to bless us in daily life, and to neglect to enter His house to return thanks, is surely an action closely parallel. Someone may object that this is a narrow view. Granted that our gratitude should find expression, it will be said that there are other ways of doing so, and that, of these, the best is the worship that a good life renders. No one denies that. Yet surely the life that merely offers its service is as unsatisfying a return as if we placed a standing order with an agent to send a regular parcel of gifts to someone who has shown us great kindness, and omitted any personal expression of our gratitude. It savours far too much of a cash transaction, with a ledger account balancing what was received by what has been returned. That is not the service love renders, nor in the fashion of true gratitude.

It may still be said that even if some personal expression of gratitude is needful, it is not necessarily that of any formal act of worship. Did not

Jesus say that true worshippers worshipped 'neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem'? Cannot worship be expressed in one's own room, or in the open temple of nature? The reply seems to be that, whilst this is possible, it is certainly true that the vast majority of those who refuse to join in public worship do not offer any other.

But setting that aside, this conception of solitary worship is unsound. It is not for nothing that language marks the distinction between private 'devotions' and public 'worship.' Neither is it an accident that every historical religion provides some expression or other of public worship. The Book of Revelation gives us a vision of worship in heaven, but it is the worship of a 'great multitude.' If we may take that as an indication of what God wills, then it is well that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

There are other reasons for expressing our worship in fellowship, reasons connected with fellowship itself. The evil influences of life are almost invariably social. We are forced to mix with the evil that is in the world, to breathe an atmosphere morally unhealthy. It is a tonic and a disinfectant to join in a spiritual fellowship, to gain and to give good, one with another. Still further, the very fact of our being together helps to take us out of the somewhat narrow circle of our individuality. Most of us suffer from too much of ourselves. Public worship lifts us out of merely self-concern. For example, plural prayer must necessarily be wider than private prayer, which tends to centre in the needs of our own personality. In this respect it has a higher value. It is not without cause that

Jesus said if *two* should agree as touching anything it should be granted, for two is the minimum for a fellowship. We are all bound together so that no man can live to himself. In any instance of a matter affecting many we naturally proceed by joint action, by petition and deputation, as signs of united purpose, which a single spokesman cannot convey. Does not a similar sense prompt the realization that the solidarity of mankind makes united worship the most effective form of worship? There are psychological reasons why the member of a group is not the same as the single individual. There are aspects of thought, will, and feeling that can be experienced only in fellowship. The very symbolism and ceremonies of religion, even the simplest, help to produce an attitude of worship that is not possible to solitary minds. To abstain from united worship leaves a gap in life's experiences which nothing else can fill.

The reasons of those who believe in God and yet decline to join in worship are singularly unconvincing. Sometimes they are frankly given by saying that the Day of Worship is taken up by necessary physical exercise. It is certainly no part of Christianity to encourage neglect of that temple of God which is the body; but, as surely as every man knows that the soul is more than the body, so does he know that he ought also to care for that. It will generally be found that worship is the index figure of the rise and fall of our spiritual life. Others are convinced that they can be 'just as good' without joining in worship as those who do join. If what has been said of corporate life be true, this is improbable. But, in any case, it

shows a poor spirit. The man concerned only with his own soul is as mean a figure as he who is concerned only to save his own skin. To refuse to join in worship is an unsocial act, and that is likely to mean a selfish spirit.

What True Gratitude Prefers

A further point arises. True gratitude prefers acts to words. The fellowship of worship is also a fellowship of service. The Churches carry on a ministry few would care to see abandoned, a ministry to the poor, the sick, the aged, the orphan. They teach little children their earliest lessons of goodness and truth. They care for lads and girls at the time when they meet the first full shock of life's temptation. They fight for ideals, for peace, sobriety, and clean living, and light a lamp of witness that the material is not the ultimate concern of life. All this depends on the continuance of the fellowship they represent. It is not easy to justify the attitude of those who approve of these things being done and abstain from any personal service to help them forward.

To sum up. We have seen that to believe in gratitude means worship. Seneca called gratitude an 'obvious' virtue, saying, 'Wherever there is life there is place for it.' There is no life concerning which, if we look below the surface, we may not say :

God's goodness hath been great to thee ;
Let never day or night unhallowed pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done.

Worship is the necessary sequel to our belief in God and our sense of His goodness in life. It is a duty, but it may well be true that every duty is also in some sense a privilege, and worship is more than the fulfilment of what we owe to God. It is the expression of that which is highest in human nature—the life of the spirit. A great deal of our time and thought is necessarily occupied by material interests—money, goods, exchange, the business of living. Yet these things are not first things. Men who think know that what is spiritual counts above all else. This is true of all thinkers, not merely of those who think directly upon religion. It is true of great poets, artists, philosophers, and scientists. To all of them the things unseen that lie behind the world of the senses are the things eternal. Man shares a body with his kindred, the animal creation. With them, too, he shares the great instinctive impulses that underlie all forms of behaviour. But his true greatness is not that he is the superlatively clever animal. It lies in the fact that he possesses the power to pass from the universe of the senses to the universe of the spirit. Worship is the expression of the truth that man is ‘little lower than divine.’

Such, then, are the reasons for worship. One more remains, the greatest and last. To gaze at night into the dome of heaven, thick with stars like the blossom on the bough in spring, may fill our minds with a wonder which is in itself a form of worship ; to see the utter loveliness of the autumn woods may call from us an expression of joy that is worship also. But those who have learnt, through Christ, to believe that the Creator, who has made

everything beautiful in its time, is a Father who loves what he has made, hear a call to a worship more grateful, more intimate, more complete than anything else can produce ; for no gratitude can compare with the response that love makes to love.

IX

‘ I BELIEVE IN LOYALTY, AND THEREFORE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD ’

I BELIEVE in Loyalty ’; and there is no man who will declare he does not. Even those who practise treachery are ashamed to preach it. No epithet is more resented than ‘ traitor,’ no insult more gross than to doubt a man’s fidelity. Loyalty needs no defence; but perhaps its implications will be clearer if first we give it some definition.

The Oldest Virtue

Our forefathers marvelled at the resources of a Creator who in six intense days could build and furnish a universe. Though for us the story stretches through countless files of cosmic time, there is no less wealth or wisdom or wonder in it. At some point, hidden from our closer view in the twilight of beginnings, the first creatures possessing what nowadays we call the ‘ group instincts ’ came into this world. From the short range or immediate point of view these group instincts were part of the apparatus of self-preservation. But God’s purposes are seldom exhausted by what may seem to be their obvious and immediate end. Looking ahead with Him, the morning stars may well have sung together, and all the sons of God shouted for

joy, when deep and wondrously in the clay of animal nature He laid, in the instincts of the herd or group, the foundations which made possible the most essential of all the virtues—loyalty.

Loyalty is the oldest virtue. Some may think that courage takes the primitive place, but mere courage is barely a virtue in itself. It may be little more than ferocity, little less than self-assertion. Only when courage is detached from the service of self and set to the service of others does it become truly virtue, and this implies that before it there existed an older virtue—loyalty.

Loyalty, staunchness to clan and tribe, was the virtue man appreciated.

When the Prehistoric spring
Made the piled Biscayan ice-pack split and shove;
And the troll and gnome and dwerg, and the Gods
of Cliff and Berg,
Were about me and beneath me and above.

But it is not only the oldest; it is the most essential. Loyalty is *the test virtue*. Without it there is no other. Every other virtue presupposes it. Who shall trust the disloyal man's faith, who believe in his hope, who lean on his love? Lacking loyalty, he can offer no token to prove that his self-sacrifice is not disguised self-interest, his justice not veiled bribery. Proverbially there is honour among thieves. The thief who has broken faith with society may none the less keep faith with his fellow outlaws, breaking the greater, but honouring none the less scrupulously the lesser, loyalty. The name traitor stands for the lowest depths in the descent of fallen man. For any and every other form of sin there may still remain this plea—that

the fog of ignorance or the cyclone of passion made shipwreck of a voyage that might have brought home good cargo. The traitor is not so. He knew the better and chose the worse. For him no plea of ignorance is possible. Deliberately he drew down the blind that shut out the light from his soul.

Loyalty may perhaps best be described if we call it the girdle of the virtues. Without it they fall apart and are lost. The very word has a fragrance which recalls its derivation. Its stem is the word law. Sometimes loyalty is to outward law, but deeper and earlier than that is the inner law, the compelling sense, 'I ought.' 'To thine own self be true.' That is at once the precondition and essence of all other loyalties. To be true to the best which we know, however imperfect that best may be, is the core and kernel of loyalty. If, in order of development, the first loyalty was fidelity to clan, in order of character the first loyalty is to that better self, which, even while we, disloyal to it, follow the worse, is loyal to us, pointing patiently still to the best. Without this, even faultless service to outer law is but legality, and though legal and loyal are words from one root, between legality and loyalty stretches the span between the east and the west. Legality is service rendered to a taskmaster and enforced by a thong; loyalty is rendered to an ideal and enforced by love. The character that lacks loyalty lacks all that makes character best.

The Basis of Society

Loyalty which makes the individual makes not less the group. It provides the girders upon which

the whole structure of society rests. Primitive man was self-reliant in a literal sense, hunting his own food, making his own dwelling, fashioning his own covering. Civilization began when, instead of each providing for himself, man began to provide for others and trust others to provide for him. We are told sometimes that the competitive system is the salt of business. It is a salt so strong that it would corrode the whole system of exchange were it not tempered by loyalty. Even where competition is keenest it is the boast of the competitors that a bargain shall be honoured, that a man shall swear to his own hurt and change not. On such loyalty—limited, no doubt, but actual—the competitive system itself depends. Otherwise it would be not competition, but confusion. Apart from the cement of loyalty, competition would break up society. The foundation of trade is trust. Strike a blow at confidence, and it is a cut across the roots of commerce. It is false to fact to think that life is primarily strife, and that aggressive or even defensive power is the chief factor in individual or social survival. Civilization arose by means of loyalty, and in that it still and always must live, move, and have its being.

It can hardly be surprising after this if it appear that loyalty, essential to character and society, is equally essential to religion. 'Wherever,' as Dr. Bosanquet has said, 'man fairly and loyally throws the seat of his value outside his immediate self into something else which he worships, with which he identifies his will . . . as an artist in his attitude to beauty or a man of science to truth, there we have in its degree the experience of religion.'

This does not contain all that religion means, but at least we can say that without this there cannot be any true religion. 'If any man come after Me, let him deny himself.' Only a fragment of the truth of these words is seen when they are taken to imply negation simply, the trimming away of the obvious outgrowths of selfishness. Far more do they imply something great and positive, of which this is but a small sign. They mean that the primary condition of discipleship is to dethrone self, to revolt against its imperatives, to throw the centre of our being outside ourselves, to deny the egoism of instinct and impulse, and make something greater than ourselves the pivot of existence. A religion may be incomplete, it may be antiquated, or irrational, or even impure. The one thing no religion can possibly be is selfish. Whatever a man's creed may be, however fantastic or unsatisfying it may appear to us, if it lead him out from self to some wider loyalty that man's religion is not vain. The lost are those who have never found the way out—from themselves.

Loyalty to the Kingdom of God

Partly for its own sake, and partly in view of what follows, we have been occupied in defining at some length what loyalty stands for in life. We have seen that it is the core of character, of society, and of religion. The implications of our belief in loyalty now concern us, and the first is that if we believe in loyalty we should believe in the Kingdom of God. Let us try to show why.

Of all our loyalties the most binding is that we owe to goodness. It may happen that we are

absolved from some of our pledges of fealty because those with whom the bond has been made break it, and it ceases. But goodness has never broken faith with any man, and to be unfaithful to what we know to be good is treachery without shadow of excuse. That is why every man knows within his own heart that he ought to keep faith with goodness.

In the next place, the characteristic of goodness is that it constitutes the simplest, clearest, most definite and universal fellowship that exists between men. Put two good men together, and, despite differences of creed, race, culture, outlook, in their goodness they will find common ground at once. They will possess that point of contact which makes individual units a fellowship. Of nothing else is it so true as of goodness that it constitutes an immediate and permanent bond of union. Not the fellowship of race, of class interests, of commercial ties, nor any other bond that brings men together, is so strong, clear, manifest, as the fellowship to which all good men belong. The widest and best name for that fellowship is the Kingdom of God.

This fellowship, like all fellowships, exists for a purpose—a purpose essential to our loyalty to goodness. Simply to try to keep our own virtue unsullied is not all that loyalty to the good demands. We have only to ask to know the answer to this question—Which is more loyal to goodness, to keep oneself unspotted from the world, or to try to remove from the world some of its blackest spots? It follows that loyalty to goodness calls for service as well as for personal uprightness of character.

But service implies co-operation. The individual is effective only in so far as he fills a place in the fellowship of the good, the Kingdom of God. The expression then of our loyalty to the good is service for the Kingdom of God.

Loyalty to goodness therefore implies both the purity of one's own inner life and also service in the fellowship of goodness. In fact, each is possible only by the other. It has been well said that 'You cannot be a whole unless you join a whole.' That is to say, an isolated individual is incomplete in goodness and in all else. It is right to say that we cannot truly serve what is good unless we are ourselves good, yet equally we cannot be good unless we serve what is good.

Our belief in loyalty to that which is good must lead, therefore, to some form of service in that universal fellowship of all good men to which Jesus gave the name of the Kingdom of God. It is a fellowship that rises above the tidal marks of creed, nationality, and class, and merges all who seek good into one. Yet this very universality which is the glory of the Kingdom of God makes it impossible that the Kingdom take the form of an outward organized society. It is an ideal and an inspiration, and these are things that cannot be organized. Yet if definite service is to be fulfilled in co-operation with others, we shall need within the Kingdom some organized society for such service. Where can it best be found?

Loyalty and the Church

The answer to this question will appear if we ask what Jesus did for that fellowship of the good

He called the Kingdom of God. He did not establish it, it is of the things that are eternal; but at its lowest ebb He gave it new life. By a divine transfusion He gave new life within its veins by His blood. Through the centuries that have followed, that life has been shown in the whole progress of humanity. It is evident, if we look widely, that both material development and moral progress have marked, and still mark, the passing of the years since Christ. It is impossible to account for that moral progress apart from Him, and not less true that the conditions of life and society which have made the material development possible are due to Him.

Nor is this all He has done for the Kingdom. Someone has said that Jesus was the great unorganizer, who bequeathed a spirit but no code to men. In one sense this is true, but, none the less, Jesus did found a society—His Church. To that society He gave the impetus of His spirit rather than any definite code of rules. But He made it unmistakable that the society was founded to serve the Kingdom. His wisdom left it free to assume any form in which it could do this, but the intention of Jesus for His Church links it inseparably with the work of the Kingdom of God.

If now we sum up the steps of our journey, the conclusion which we are approaching is manifest. We began with the consideration of what loyalty meant, and we saw that in itself and above all else it meant loyalty to goodness. This in its turn implied loyalty to the fellowship of goodness. A double reason may be given for this. Loyalty is a term that implies someone else to whom we are

loyal. Even if we say, 'To thine own self be true,' we mean that the various sides of our personality must be true to the highest, their leader and monarch, treating ourselves as if within our own personality there were many; and, indeed, this is so. Again, there never yet was, or could be, solitary goodness. Both loyalty and goodness, then, are words which imply fellowship. Loyalty to that which is good, therefore, is utterly meaningless unless it involve service to the fellowship of goodness which was named by Jesus the Kingdom of God. Lastly, we saw that such service was possible only by being associated for practical co-operation with others by means of some organized society, and that Jesus Himself founded such a society—His Church. Does it not appear, then, that to believe in loyalty should lead us into connexion with that Church?

Some will not agree. They will probably accept what has been said of the necessity of definite co-operative effort to help forward the good, but they will say, and quite rightly, that there are other societies which do this besides the Church. Even so, recollecting what Jesus has done for all that is good, is there any society with a greater claim upon you than His? If He were to appear to-day and found a new society, millions outside the Church would rush to enrol themselves in it. Why not, then, the society He has founded? The faults and failings of that society are usually quoted as answer, but actually they serve as excuse rather than answer. Suppose the Church consisted of perfect human beings, would not the very people who refuse to join to-day feel that such a society of

perfection was no place for fallible souls like themselves? The Church Triumphant may consist of 'the spirits of just men made perfect.' The earthly Church would not fulfil its purpose if it were so. It is a training school, and therefore exists to receive and improve the imperfect. Like every school, some of its pupils are failures, but it is manifestly unfair to compare these with the best outside the Church. Compare best with best and worst with worst, and the Church will not fear the scrutiny. She has her weaknesses, and both friends and foes are apt to recognize them more clearly than her strength. But what counts is that the Church is the society of Jesus, tracing descent through the unbroken apostolic succession of faithful men and women who have formed it right back to His own ministry, and through it we to-day can be His successors in the work He established. That is an honour any man might well covet. His Church is great and varied. Its various branches are wide enough to offer a spiritual home to every type of religious experience and temperament, yet all link back to Him. To be loyal to goodness is a duty that cannot be better fulfilled than by being loyal to the One who of all is Best, and we cannot better show our loyalty to Him than by helping to make effective the society He founded.

X

‘I BELIEVE IN RIGHTS AND DUTIES, AND THEREFORE IN SOCIAL CHRISTIANITY’

I BELIEVE in Rights and Duties.’ It would be difficult to find any one who declared that either word was meaningless to him. Some are more insistent upon declaring what man’s rights are ; others incline to preaching to him his duties. But are not the two words two sides of the same thing? Wherever there is a right, there is a corresponding duty. Conversely, whoever has duties to fulfil must also have rights to claim. We do not usually speak of an animal’s duties, yet in a certain sense the uses we set them to fulfil are duties, and these give them the moral right to humane treatment at our hands. Much more so with man. The greatest charter of human rights ever given to man is found in the teaching of Jesus Christ. Because it was a charter of rights, it was also a charter of duties. It may be that men have been more prone to recognize the duties Christianity enjoins than the rights it gives. A just presentation of Christ’s teaching will emphasize both alike.

The Programme of Social Christianity

If I believe in rights and duties, then, can I embody my belief better than by accepting the

programme of social Christianity? Christianity is primarily a spiritual movement, but for these reasons at least we must insist that it is also social. (1) Moral and spiritual life is lived in the existing social order. It is as impossible to undertake the cure of souls without reference to social conditions, as it is for a physician to undertake the cure of bodies without reference to the existing arrangements for sanitation, light, air, food, and water supply, though these are not directly his concern. (2) All Christian citizens must desire that in their social order Christ's teaching should be applied to themselves. Hence they must attempt to apply it to others that the direct and practical command of the Golden Rule be honoured.

The work of Christianity in the social order is threefold. (1) To alleviate its evils. But no one can hold that this is fulfilled by being merely an ambulance for the casualties of the present system. It must involve some attempt to cope with those evils. (2) To provide standards, by which to investigate the moral codes and customs of society. (3) To Christianize the social order. This may involve legislation; but before this it involves something without which legislation will be ineffective, namely, progressive education towards Christian ideals.

Under these conditions, then, Christianity preaches to mankind what we may sum up as the seven rights and seven duties of man. First THE RIGHT TO LIVE AND THE DUTY TO RESPECT LIFE. Jesus implied this right when He spoke of the Heavenly Father who fed His children. He vastly extended the duty of respecting life when He taught that the spirit of

murder was guilty, even as 'of old time' it was declared that the act was. God has made the earth rich enough to provide food for every human being. The conditions of human society so control the food supply that some are wasteful in luxury and others starve. 'It is not the will of your Heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish.' God gives to every man the right to live, and has provided a sufficiency of food. With the right goes the duty; and interpreting the command 'Thou shalt not kill' as widely as did Jesus, we may say it forbids not only the taking of human life, but endangering it. It forbids war, but not less does it lay upon mankind the duty of doing everything possible to minimize unhealthy and dangerous occupations and conditions, and it should absolutely prohibit dangerous performances, such as still disgrace us, when human limbs and lives are risked to afford a sensation at some spectacle or entertainment.

Closely akin to this is THE RIGHT TO WORK AND THE DUTY TO DO SO, the first lesson taught by Jesus, taught even before He was the Teacher, at the carpenter's bench. God has put into the earth sufficient natural resources to employ every human being. The problem of unemployment must be laid at man's door. In this case at least our facile practice of laying our problems at the gates of heaven fails us. The payment made by the State to the unemployed is a recognition of this right, and of the unsatisfactoriness of the social system, which prevents so many from executing it. It is a poor substitute, however, for work. But so far from its being a charity, it is rather an injury to its recipients, and is justifiable only as a temporary palliative.

With the right, the duty goes hand in hand. The value and dignity of labour were facts the thinkers of Greece failed to appreciate. The conception of the gods, which the heathen world framed, was one which represented them in idleness, working perhaps if the whim so moved them, but not as essentially workers. 'My Father worketh even until now, and I work,' said Jesus. Christianity conceives the life of God as a life of activity, and in consequence must hold that the non-worker, the man who contributes nothing by hand or brain to the good of the commonwealth, is living an utterly wrong life. That he may possess sufficient money to keep the community from being burdened by his support is no excuse for his burdening the community by his useless existence. It is not merely the economic factor which is involved; it is something which, in the eyes of Jesus, was still more important, the spiritual factor. A parasitic existence can neither possess nor give spiritual values.

Next comes THE RIGHT TO SELFHOOD AND THE DUTY WE OWE TO OURSELVES AND TO OTHER SELVES, summed up in the command 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Those words 'as thyself' recognize the right and value of the individual self, just as the words which precede them recognize the rights and values of other selves. This right includes a fair *intellectual* chance, recognized at last in the system of public education, to some extent at least; it also includes a fair *physical* chance, which is rather more tardily being recognized; finally, a fair *moral* chance, which for some sections of the community is not yet obtained, though signs of awakening conscience on this point are happily present. Given

these, however, there is given with them an opportunity to fulfil the accompanying duty. The duty to oneself is that of self-respect, self-preservation, self-development, and self-discipline; that to others is of sympathy, in the wider and truer sense of the term, which we sometimes express by speaking of fellow-feeling and of co-operation. The unsocial spirit is the very antithesis of religion. To love God is to love one's brother also.

THE RIGHT TO LIBERTY AND THE DUTY TO RESPECT
IT is a right which, though the plainest inference from the principles of Jesus, was not given till many centuries of Christian teaching had passed. Its final triumph was a signal indication that the Spirit of Truth, of whom Jesus spoke, has continued to apply His teaching. It may be set forth by saying that every one may have the completest liberty to do what he will, with but one proviso—that his actions interfere with no other. Yet this proviso, eminently reasonable as it is, suffices, if it is truly kept, to guard against all the abuses of liberty. It may be thought that the individual who endangers his own honour, morals, health, or life by his action is within the law just suggested, if no one else is involved. But the latter supposition is impossible. No man liveth to himself. We live again in our children; we live in our influence, even in the very suggestion that our character contributes to all we meet. No wrong thing, even if primarily done to oneself, can be kept in its consequences to oneself. It tends to bring others into the worst of all bondage—that of sin.

THE RIGHT TO TRUTH AND THE DUTY TO SPEAK It

depend on each other. Every lie is a direct breach of the Golden Rule. Moreover, the very purpose for which a lie is told would be defeated if no one spoke the truth. The contradictory character inherent in wrong is clearly shown here. The liar is able to lie because others speak the truth. He relies on them to make his lie effective. Is it useless to appeal to him to see the meanness of such an action? It has been said that the Ten Commandments touch only indirectly on this supreme moral duty. The New Testament makes good any deficiency with outspoken plainness. Falsehood is not only a misrepresentation of things as God has made them, it is a direct attack upon the very life-line of social intercourse, upon that which is absolutely essential to the social bond. Even the enemies of Jesus testified that He was true and taught the way of God in truth, and the followers of such a Master must uphold not only the sacred nature of truth socially, but must learn fearlessly to welcome intellectual truth, even where it seems to conflict with previous opinions or established doctrines.

THE RIGHT TO JUSTICE AND THE DUTY TO SHOW IT are taught in several of the parables of Jesus, not less than in the Sermon on the Mount. On the human side a stabilized state of society is necessary for the enactment and enforcement of justice, and, after many vicissitudes, most civilized countries have found that majority rule is the best working basis of society. Where this has been attained, and the individual citizen has his place as a unit in selecting the Government, to attempt to carry measures by force or rebellion is as sheer a tyranny

as any autocrat ever exercised. Whether, under other circumstances even, Christian ethics permits rebellion is doubtful. 'They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' It is certain, however, that, whether the right to justice is conceded or not, the teaching of a Master who held that it was more blessed to give than to receive implies that we must act justly. 'In His humiliation His judgement was taken away,' words which are best understood by rendering, 'Justice was denied Him.' He who in His trial received no justice gave justice to every man.

Lastly, we may put THE RIGHT TO WORSHIP AND THE DUTY TO DO SO. We have spoken of this in an earlier part of our creed, where we saw that gratitude led to worship. It is the sense that every man has a right to the highest knowledge of God that he may most worthily worship God which inspires Christian missions. It is amazing to find people who believe we have a right to enter any uncivilized land and exploit its people and resources—nay, even, who speak of the duty of taking up 'the white man's burden'—and object to our offering to the voluntary choice of native peoples the highest conception of the God who made them. Unless we regard ourselves as trustees for the backward races of mankind, we have no shadow of moral right to interfere with them at all. If we so regard ourselves, then we cannot even make a pretence of offering to help them towards the rights and duties of civilization, unless we afford them means of that knowledge of God which alone has satisfied the civilized world. The right and duty to worship the one true God is essential to true civilization.

The Christian Charter

The path taken above has been somewhat different from that followed in discussing the former articles of our creed. Yet it was said, when speaking of salvation, that salvation through Christ meant more than cleansing the individual soul; it meant the material and moral redemption of humanity. Precisely because this is a working creed it needs to be a practical creed. The line of thought it has followed has been to show that the logical fulfilment of man's belief in things that are good is found in the teaching of Christianity; but this is not to be limited to abstract applications simply. To believe in love leads to belief in Christ, but belief in Christ means belief in, and action upon, the great charter of human rights and duties which He gave. 'Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' To that very pointed question no answer is recorded. It is unanswered, surely because it is unanswerable.

It is one of the tragedies of our day that many who earnestly seek to give men their rights, and teach them their duties, offer no allegiance to Jesus Christ. They do not dispute that His teaching gives the very charter for which they contend; but they think it is inextricably associated with other doctrines and positions they disapprove, and so they leave Him on one side, whilst borrowing largely from His principles. The mistake of this lies in the fact that the principles of Christ need for their successful application the spirit of Christ. However true and beautiful they are, against them is the dead-weight of human selfishness, and it is certainly psychologically false to think you can

exorcize selfishness by reasoning. The only dynamic that can remove selfishness and inspire unselfishness is emotion, the power of love. To publish broadcast the admirably rational discussions of the virtues which Aristotle, for example, gave us in his *Ethics*, is hardly likely to succeed in stirring a single soul. But in the New Testament it is written, 'He laid down His life for us, and we ought. . . .' We may break off there; for, as the geologist fractures the rock to show the inner structure, we see embedded in the words the great inner principle that has turned millions of men to righteousness, the moral compulsion of a great act of grace. We believe in rights and duties; but how are men to be moved to give those rights and fulfil those duties? The answer of history is that in this respect no power on earth has done anything approaching that which has been done by the appeal of the love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is pathetic to find that men still believe that force—either the force of revolution or the force of legislation—can establish good permanently or eradicate evil. Both history and psychology confirm the truth of the precept that evil is overcome with good, and with good only. That is why the belief of our working creed in rights and duties leads us to assert that rights and duties need as a basis the spirit of Jesus Christ, and that only in connexion with Him can there be any hope of man attaining and keeping the charter of true manhood.

XI

'I BELIEVE IN THE VALUE OF LIFE, AND THEREFORE IN IMMORTALITY'

I BELIEVE in the Value of Life.' Every man does. 'All that a man hath will he give for his life.' So little are we ready to believe it possible for a normal man to regard the value of his life lightly, that we insist on declaring the suicide 'temporarily insane.' Perhaps the surest sign of the progress of civilization is to be found in the value set on human life. Throughout the vast tragedy of a world war it was not the downfall of dynasties, nor the ruin of cities, nor the material waste, that impressed us most. It was the loss of human life. We are waking to the fact that a great part of child mortality is preventable, and the conscience of the country declares it must be prevented. We hail the progress of medical science and hygiene because they contribute to the supreme end of saving and prolonging life. If there is one value that stands out first to-day above all other values, it is that of human life. Even though practice still lags behind theory, still we believe that man is of greater worth than anything material; the lives of the crew of more importance than the salving of ship and cargo; the inmates of the burning house of more value than the most priceless

property that may be stored there. But the question remains whether this is true from other than our own human standpoint. Does Nature, for example, show man as having outstanding worth in creation, or is he just an incident in the material universe in which he lives? Some deny that she does. 'Nature has no more interest in man than in gnats, and, except that man troubles his Mother Earth for three score years and ten and the gnat but for a day, there is no significant difference between their beginnings and their endings on this planet.' So says a modern critic. One wonders in such a case why creation did not stop short with gnats. Why proceed to the needless trouble of producing man? The root from which such ideas spring is generally found in the sense of man's insignificance amidst cosmic space-time. Our earth, we are told, is less in comparison with the universe than is a dewdrop in comparison with the Atlantic, and that we 'ignominious bipeds on our fractional planet' are highly presumptuous if we think our existence is of the least importance in the universe.

The Greatest Wonder of the World

It is possible, however, to admit all these facts concerning man and his relation to the universe and yet draw a very different conclusion from them. It is human consciousness that has discovered the measurements of the universe. The universe is not aware of itself; it exists, not for itself, but only for those minds, human or divine, which know it. Is not the vastness of the universe, then, also an indication of the greatness of the human mind that unlocks the hidden secrets of

space and time, of matter and energy? Instead of belittling man, does not the story of the universe enhance him? It has well been said that if some vast cosmic upheaval—perhaps the collision of our earth with some other body—were to sweep away the whole human race at a stroke, none the less humanity, watching and powerless to avert the coming destruction, would be far greater than the forces that were about to destroy it. They would be unaware of what they were accomplishing; man, ready to perish, would none the less know he was to perish. Put in another way, we may say that the eighth and greatest wonder of the world is the human mind which discovers all the other wonders. Man does count, therefore, for something in the scheme of Nature. Even the facts cited to prove his insignificance turn, like Balaam, to declare the opposite, to show his greatness.

If, then, I believe in the value of life, if mankind acknowledges it, if the very facts that are said to show how little man counts in the scheme of things actually reveal how he is the greatest of all the wonders of the universe, must I not draw a corollary from my belief, and hold that man is destined for something more than the few brief years he spends in the flesh? Do not these things suggest that the human spirit survives the dissolution of the material body? In other words, does not belief in the value of man imply belief in immortality? It seems that the whole question of immortality centres in this point. If man has only an instrumental value in the universe, he may perish when his use has been fulfilled. If he has an intrinsic value, he must surely survive for its sake.

Immortality a Natural Belief

Educated people often find it hard to believe in immortality. Primitive people never find any difficulty in doing so. Indeed, for them it is certain that the difficulty would be to imagine extinction. No tribe exists on the face of the earth to-day but believes in a spirit world. As far as we know, none ever has existed. The burial of stone implements with the dead is evidence of the belief in the Stone Age, and the custom goes back to the earlier period of that age. As far back as history can trace, man has believed in immortality. A natural belief of the human race, accepted by the overwhelming majority of mankind of all ages and all stages of culture, may not be entitled on this account to be regarded as established, but it is at least entitled to respect. To count it a delusion is to disparage the stock of human experience from which the critic himself derived all he knows, a procedure which reminds one of sawing off the bough on which we are seated. All the universal beliefs of humanity witness to *something* that is valid. If they do not, there is only left for us an utter scepticism concerning man's power of attaining any truth at all.

We are sometimes challenged to prove that man is immortal. The challenge can be met if we do not forget that different classes of facts have different kinds of 'proof' attached to them. When it is said that the doctrine of immortality cannot be proved, it will be found to mean that the kind of proof attached to the most undeniable type of mundane facts cannot be afforded in this case; which is about as sensible as to say that, since one

can measure a yard but not a scent, the reality of the sense of touch is proved but not that of smell. To every class of fact its own proof. A mathematical proof is self-evident to all capable of understanding it. Such a proof cannot be afforded in a law-court, yet there 'proof' is accepted based purely on circumstantial evidence. If we regard the theory of the evolution of species as proved, the proof in this case is of yet another kind. To prove a picture is beautiful is to use the word proof as indicating something else once more. Indeed, ninety per cent. of our beliefs are based on greater or less probability rather than strict proof, and the belief in immortality, naturally, is amongst them. The available evidence neither gives obvious proof nor disproof. But of the type of proof of which such a belief is capable there is no lack. The very incompleteness of life seems strong evidence that its issues continue beyond its span, and that justice seems to demand some retribution hereafter is not likely to be disputed.

The Root of the Matter

But if we try to go straight down to the root of the whole matter we shall find the issue comparatively simple, for it is bound up with what is a root-question of religion, that from which we set out at the beginning of the article—the value of life. Does God value the personalities He has created, or are they simply tools, to be used for some temporary purpose which is fulfilled at death, when the tool is scrapped? Some honestly believe that the latter is man's only function. Yet, if so, we must explain why in this case the method which

all the rest of creation illustrates has been ignored. The animals are endowed only with powers that find their fulfilment in the existing world. Man has an animal body and an endowment of similar powers. But he also possesses a spiritual nature that seems needless if his earthly life exhausts all the purpose of his creation. No animal has any instinct which leads it to seek what may not possibly be achieved. Why should the rule that links the possession of desire with the possibility of satisfaction be broken in man's case? That man should be able to envisage immortality is an indication that it concerns him. That his mind can think in terms of eternity is merely waste if eternity lies wholly beyond his destiny. Yet it is not the custom of the Creator to give needless and pointless impulses to the creatures He makes. Moreover, would a good God enable man to long for an immortality that cannot be his? You or I at least would not create sensitive beings to yearn for a future that we had no intention of affording them. Why credit the Creator with a lower moral standard than those He has created, or how explain why we should have such sentiments of what is just if the Source of our being is destitute of justice? It is true that one may occasionally meet people who tell us they have no desire for a future life. Such a view as little contradicts man's general hope of immortality as does the fact that a number of people commit suicide contradict the general truth that men desire intensely to live and preserve their life on earth. Moreover, few of those even who profess no personal desire for a hereafter would wish that the spirit of a child of theirs, shall we say, who

died as the first promise of its personality was opening, should go out into utter darkness rather than have some hereafter of development.

The Character of a Future Life

There are, then, good reasons for the belief in a life beyond death. It is a curious fact that few people find any difficulty in believing that the material universe, or at least the elements which constitute it, should be eternal. Yet the material universe exists only as an object for the consciousnesses that are acquainted with it. It is an utter impossibility to think even of its existence in no relation to consciousness. Yet there are those who find it easier to imagine the extinction of all consciousness than the extinction of atoms and electrons. It is a curious paradox. One must conclude that personal factors rather than argument determine the attitude men take towards immortality. Argument cannot decide the question either for or against. Those who believe in the value of man, and in the relation between man and God, cannot believe that such a relation is a passing alliance broken by physical death. Arguments about the insignificance of man in the universe do not move them. They cannot think that God's values can perish out of His hand.

One other question remains. Can we know anything of the nature of the hereafter? Perhaps we can. The fact that it is one of the keenest joys of life to be able to think indicates that we were meant to think. We trust our reason to give us true hypotheses of the character of the material universe, and not less of the universe of our minds.

Why not, then, trust it to construct some conception of the spiritual realm? The old and crude ideas of bliss and torment have passed with the age in which alone they seemed sufficient, and we can no more return to them than science can return to her old conceptions of the nature of matter. But the analogy of Nature, the work of God we know here, does not encourage the belief that sin, the waste of our life and its opportunities, involves no consequences hereafter. Nature punishes offences against her laws with severity, and we have no reason for imagining that the relation between sin and punishment is broken by death. We have less confidence than our forefathers in stating what may be the nature of such punishment, but perhaps the uncertainty of its character adds to rather than diminishes its severity.

On the other side, the conception of a hereafter of happiness which consists of eternal rest is unsatisfactory, for we are almost obliged to interpret this life as a training for the life beyond, and all forms of training must bear a definite relation to the object for which we are trained. This life throughout is a struggle, and it is strangely inconsequential that we learn to strive if there is no progress, nor movement, nor attaining hereafter. It seems, then, that we go on where we leave off, starting life beyond as we were when we ended this life. Perhaps the nature of our future development will be that we shall be able to seek the permanent values we have sought on earth—beauty, truth, goodness—in themselves as positive qualities, hampered no more by the continued presence of their opposites—ugliness, falsehood, evil. We cannot believe that

goodness, truth, and beauty are relative terms, representing qualities which would be meaningless if their opposites did not exist. For example, on earth we know light always in contrast with darkness, but if there were no darkness there would still be light. Similarly, may not the great moral, religious, and aesthetic values, which here we have to try to disentangle from the opposites which dim them, exist for us hereafter undimmed by contrasting evils, as positive and eternal values to be pursued and attained? That, at any rate, is an intelligible conception of what would surely be a life of happiness hereafter; and if we must leave the details aside as beyond our present conception, none the less the picture presented is a far more attractive vision than the somewhat incongruous, not to say repulsively terrestrial, pictures which some spiritualists give to us of a future life. At least in these days few care to set a boundary to what future generations of humanity may attain in knowledge of this universe. But spiritual powers have also developed as well as intellectual powers in the process of evolution, and man, perhaps, is destined to know in the future some better thing concerning life to come than our present mental development can allow us to conceive.

XII

‘I BELIEVE IN MY CREED, AND THEREFORE IN CHRISTIANITY’

‘**I** BELIEVE in my Creed.’ That we may be sure of this, let us first recount what we have thought out, to see where we have been led. Then we may ask what conclusions are implied by our working creed. Our starting-point was perhaps unusual. We began with, and have been guided throughout by, the ordinary beliefs of the ordinary right-minded man. Most creeds tell us what theology believes, what may reasonably be believed, or what ought to be believed. We have preferred instead to ask what actually is believed, and the things most surely believed by good men everywhere. Out of this common stock of belief we have built up the eleven articles of our creed, and now we can say, ‘I believe in my creed as a whole.’

Our Creed Reviewed

Recounting, then, we began with the belief in *goodness*. Amid many shams in life, none the less we have experienced real goodness, and believe in its existence in men’s hearts. Not only so, but we believe that good ought to be, and evil ought not to be. Unless we are to regard this belief as

a mere human preference, like our tastes, we must be prepared to see in its witness that behind the universe and throughout it is a God who is good. Our belief in goodness led us to God.

Next came belief in *love*. We saw how that belief was almost entirely due to the teachings and life of Jesus Christ. In Him the idea of love received a supreme embodiment. Such love we must recognize as divine. Whether or not we employ the phrases of the historic creeds to describe His divinity, there seems no other possible explanation of the unique life He lived, of the unique position He holds, than by saying that He who was man was more than ordinary man—was divine. Belief in love thus led to belief in Christ.

Belief in *fellowship* we saw to be inevitable. Even the loneliest man has at some time or other known its joys. Indeed, it is the capacity for fellowship that makes loneliness possible. Fellowship in man, we thought, seemed to necessitate the belief that the divine nature also partook of fellowship. Hence we recognized an element of great value in the Christian doctrines of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity. It is easy to criticize either doctrine, but it is none the less true that they contribute to our thought a means of expressing the belief that God's nature is social, not solitary—a belief absolutely vital to religion.

To believe in *truth*, we saw, was to recognize the truth of the Bible as a spiritual record. In so far as the Bible recounts history, its accuracy must be tested by the same canons as apply to any other history. If we recognize that, the Bible ceases to be a battle-ground, and becomes a garden of delight.

We are left free to enjoy its spiritual values, and we may claim rightly that in religious worth no book in the world can approach it.

Personal experience must make us all believe in *conscience*. Conscience teaches us the actuality of sin. Several plausible theories offer excuse for sin, but conscience, with its sense of shame and remorse, forbids our accepting such excuses, and in our heart of hearts we know its witness is true. Happily, the grim reality of sin is not the end of the matter. We went on to speak of the belief in *hope*, a belief which defies the protests of pessimism, and remains truly characteristic of mankind. Hope is always diverted towards one thing only, namely, what we hold to be best. It appeared that the only sure hope for the fulfilment of the best alike for the individual and the race lay in Christ. He alone is able to deliver them from the worst. To say that Christ saves men and nations from the power of evil is a simple statement of fact. The word 'atonement' raises the question of how this can happen. We do not know, but we do know it does happen. The fact of the atonement, the fact that Christ rescues us from the worst and makes possible the best, is true, whether we have a theory that is satisfactory or not.

We were next concerned with the belief in *possibilities*. Again it is a case of practice against theory. Our theorists tell us we are just machines, and contradict their theories in practice every day of their lives. The belief in freedom of choice is so strongly entrenched in experience that it survives all the assaults of the determinists. To believe in freedom leads us to belief in its necessary sequel,

guidance ; in other words, prayer. Otherwise the power of choice is a curse, not a blessing.

Gratitude is a sentiment no one will admit that he lacks. Gratitude to God implies worship. True, we are often neglectful of worship, but this arises because we do not always think out what is implied by what we believe. The man who thinks about God's goodness will not be found neglecting his own response to it.

We saw in *loyalty* the oldest virtue, and we saw also that no loyalty was more compelling than that which we owe to the good. It implies fellowship with, and service for, the good, and this led us to the conception of the Kingdom of God, which is the fellowship of all souls who seek for good. We saw, too, the place the Church held in relation to the Kingdom, and the claim that Church and Kingdom had upon our loyalty.

Rights and duties are recognized by every honest man, and our belief in them, we argued, could not be better embodied than by accepting the great charter of Jesus, who gave the most wonderful social programme the world has ever known. The Sermon on the Mount is the universal manifesto of justice and liberty, but it needs the spirit of its Giver to make its law a living reality.

Finally, the belief in *the value of life* led us to see that its consequences implied immortality, and that the belief in immortality was based, not so much on the nature of man, but on the nature of God, whom we recognized in the first chapter as good.

Our Creed and Christianity

It appears, then, that the beliefs of the common creed of good men everywhere imply conclusions

which are fulfilled in nothing so much as in the religion of Jesus. Of course, there are many good men who are not His followers, but there is no contradiction between the Christianity to which our creed has pointed and their principles. This harmony is, after all, what we might expect. We recognize that all goodness comes from God, and so we should not expect that Christ as God's revelation would destroy the good God has revealed through other channels, but rather fulfil it. This we see is the case. Our working creed has not given us all that is taught in the name of Christianity. It has left us a free hand with regard to many theological doctrines. But it has shown how the things which honest men everywhere believe lead naturally to a position which contains the simple essentials of Christianity. We are thus provided with an answer to the final question remaining, What consequences are implied by the results we have reached? And the answer seems plain: Our creed implies that we should accept the Christian faith which fulfils it; not necessarily the views and doctrines of any particular Church, but the religion of Jesus; that we should follow out our creed under His leadership, as the Way and Truth and Life.

Is, then, Christianity the true fulfilment of the good man's creed? May it not have some other issue? Perhaps it is asked if Christianity is indeed a final revelation, or a stage that will be passed, as others have been, in the progress of the race. There is not the slightest evidence to support such an opinion. Religions never collapse unless they are supplanted, and there is not even the trace of a

rival to Christianity on the most distant horizon. More than that, Christianity has been able to co-exist with the advance of knowledge for two thousand years, and there is not a single thing taught by Jesus that two thousand years has made obsolete or untenable. There are plenty of out-dated doctrines which have borne, and even still bear, the imprimatur of Christian churches, but the essence of Christianity, given in the teaching of Jesus, has not lost a single line. Moreover, only one of the world's faiths is universal, able to appeal to West and East, to North and South, and that is Christianity. Our creed leads us, then, to no untried experiment, no passing fashion of faith, in finding fulfilment in the religion of Jesus.

The Motives of the Man Outside

Despite this, we are faced by the fact that many who will accept the articles of our creed, and will, perhaps, for the most part at least, not demur at what we have argued to be their implications, will decline the step we have just urged. Why? In the majority of cases we find that two motives are generally given as reasons for not professing an open allegiance to Christianity. One we have already discussed. When speaking of loyalty, we saw how often the failings of professing Christians served as an excuse. Modern psychology tells us that much of our reasoning is 'rationalization'; that is, we invent reasons to account, both to others and ourselves, for our actions, when the true motive is one we will not acknowledge. Since we can always find sincere professing Christians as well as those who seem to us to be insincere, this insistence on

the failures of Christians appears more likely to be 'rationalization' than the true reason.

The other motive is the fear of incurring increased responsibility. All of us are conscious of our shortcomings, and it often seems that if we profess little we shall at least be less guilty than if we accentuated our shortcomings by professing to obey a rule we do not keep. This is a more honourable motive, but it overlooks the fact that no man is allowed to fix his own responsibility. It is fixed for him, one might almost say automatically, by what he has received. It would be no excuse for the student who has been trained sufficiently to pass an examination to say that he did not profess to be able to pass; a man who breaks the law is not exempt by pleading that he does not profess to understand it. Whether we profess to be Christians or not, we are surely judged, not by what we profess, but by what we have received. If we have received knowledge of a better way than the way of life we are following, we are guilty in not trying to follow it, whatever we profess or do not profess.

The same responsibility is implied by those very criticisms of Christians which we said just now were set forth as justification of the critic's refusal to acknowledge Christ's rule as his own law. In criticizing Christians as being no better than others, he implies that they should be, else there is no point in the criticism. That is to say, he acknowledges Christianity as showing a higher and better standard than the standards of the world generally. In so doing he puts himself into a very perilous position. If there is an inexcusable sin, it is that of not trying to be the best we know. To know a

higher standard and not to attempt to follow it is a thousand times worse than the most glaring lapses of those who, imperfectly though it be, still try to follow the higher. 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' In judging the defections of others one does not excuse but rather condemns oneself. If we believe in the articles of our creed, we must seek the best way to carrying out that belief. We have seen that to do so involves accepting Christianity, the Christianity that represents the teaching and spirit of Jesus. To seek to evade this by pleading the defects of others is a vain excuse, if ever there was one.

Jesus the Uncriticizable

Whatever may be said of His Church, we must admit that Jesus Himself is beyond criticism. 'I find no fault in Him,' said Pilate. For two thousand years the searchlights of criticism have been concentrated upon His character, and what is the result? There is only one word to describe it—it is beggarly. One critic, for example, alleges that Jesus was 'provocative' towards the scribes and Pharisees. Had it been otherwise, the same critic would probably have alleged that Jesus was overawed by them, and lacked moral courage. Another has said that Jesus provoked His own death. Whether that is true or not of Jesus, it was certainly true of Socrates, and yet we see a heroism in the inflexibility of Socrates that touches us; while Galileo, repudiating his own convictions aloud, and muttering them in a whisper, may be instanced as prudent but scarcely as heroic. The last word of fantastic criticism is that which states

that the mind of Jesus ignored art and literature, and that no one could imagine Him founding a free library! If criticism is reduced to that, let us leave it alone.

Our working creed, then, has brought us into touch with a Teacher who is uncriticizable, and a teaching which, when separated from human misinterpretations, is as lofty and above reproach as its Giver. Can we do better than follow the advice that Charles Dickens wrote in his will? 'I exhort my dear children humbly to try to guide themselves by the reading of the New Testament in its broad spirit, and to put no faith in any man's narrow construction of its letter here and there.' One of the tragedies of the day is the number of men 'not far from the Kingdom' who should be within it, and might be would they but recognize that Christianity does not bind them either to the beliefs or habits of their grandfathers. Our working creed has been followed out with the hope that it may reveal the simple essentials of Christian belief and practice, and show how closely linked they are to what we do believe. If this creed be ours, then let us have courage to seek its highest, and indeed only certain, fulfilment as disciples of Jesus Christ.

